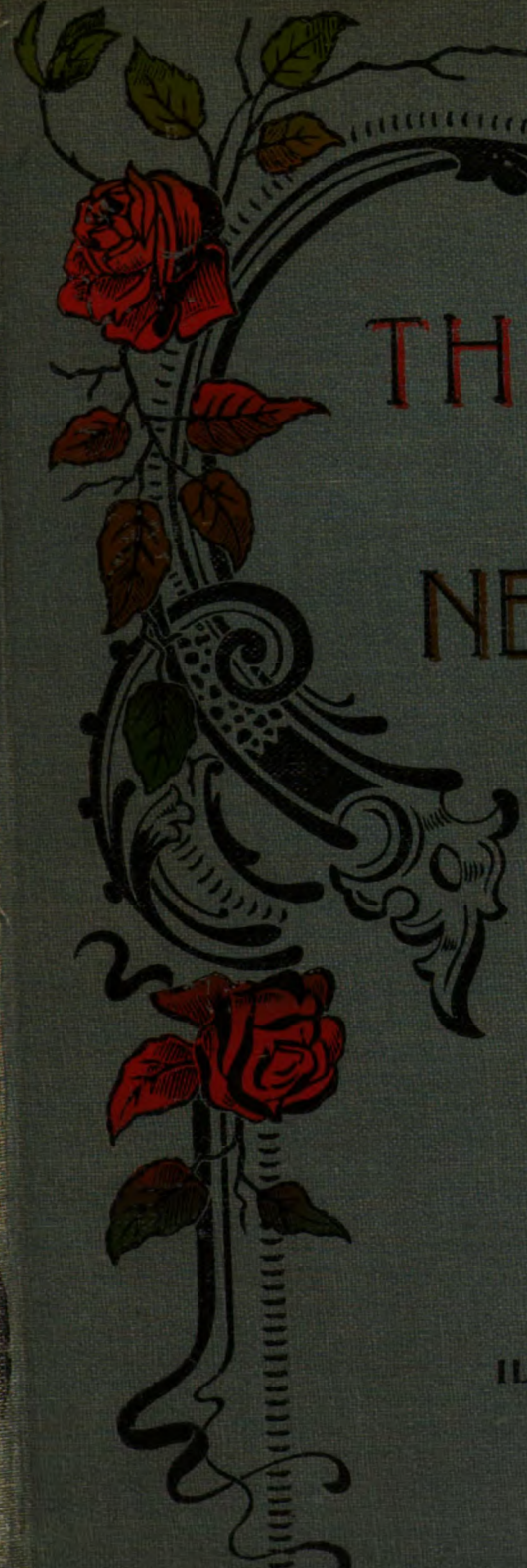

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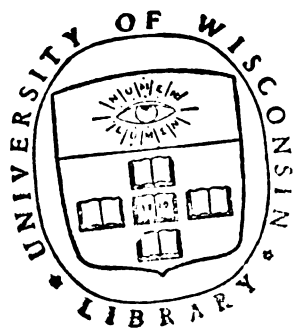




THE WORLD THAT NEVER WAS

BY
A. ST. JOHN ADCOCK

ILLUSTRATED BY
TOM BROWNE



MAY 31 1963

THE WORLD THAT NEVER WAS

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THE WORLD THAT NEVER WAS

A London Fantasy

Arthur
A. ST. JOHN *ADCOCK*
BY

Illustrated by
TOM BROWNE

LONDON:
FRANCIS GRIFFITHS
34, Maiden Lane, Strand, W.C.
1908

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TO

MR. AND MRS. J. B. MULHOLLAND

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OLIVE.

SHE IS A YEAR OLDER THAN TONY.

The World that Never Was

A LONDON FANTASY

CHAPTER I

OLIVE AND TONY AT HOME

If you don't happen to know about Olive and Tony, you ought to; if you do know about them, then you had better read this so as to make quite sure there is nothing you have forgotten, and that I have not left anything out.

As a matter of fact, I don't really suppose that you do know about them. Hardly anybody does yet, outside their own home, except me, for they have not many friends; they never give parties, though they are just going to begin giving them now, and they so rarely go to any that when they do they are too shy to talk of themselves, unless you question them. They are not used to society, you see, and feel strange in it. So that even if you

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have met them, it is not very likely they have told you the story about themselves that I am going to tell you: they would be afraid you might laugh and not believe it.

Being so nearly certain, then, that you do not know Olive, perhaps the best thing for me to do, first of all, is to try and describe what she is like. To begin with, she is pretty, of course: she has rich, curly brown hair, and there is a dimple that twinkles pleasantly in one of her cheeks whenever she smiles. She is neither too plump nor too thin, but altogether dainty, and rosy, and winsome, with a thoughtful light in her bright, dark eyes that somehow gives her a little look of sadness until she smiles, then her dimple and her eyes laugh at you and make you wonder why it was that you fancied she was not happy.

She is a year older than Tony; not that she is actually old, mind you, unless you consider that seven and a half is rather a good age. She is only a year older than Tony but seems more, because for these last two years she has been doing her best to take care of him and not let him miss their mother so much.

For their mother fell dangerously ill two years ago; I expect some of you must have heard of

that; and the doctors said she would never get well again unless she was kept very quiet and had a complete change of air; so she was sent right away to live with some friends on the other side of the world, and Aunt Prue, their father's sister, who has come to keep house and look after Olive and Tony for her till she is quite strong and can come back to them is very beautiful and very proud, but is not fond of children.

Somehow, she is strict and impatient with them both, and now and then a little unkind; she does not care to be bothered with them, and leaves them pretty much to Becky and themselves. Their father is a wealthy merchant, and all day he is away at work in his great warehouse in the City, and when he returns home of evenings he is tired and Aunt Prue says they only fidget him, so they are not allowed to go down and have dinner with him, and when he comes up to see them it is mostly after they are in bed, or for a few minutes first thing in the morning, before he sets out to business.

But if he does not see much of them, it is not because he doesn't love them; they know that perfectly well; it is simply because he is too busy. In their quiet fashion they admire him and

are very fond of him ; they like him much better than the governess, naturally, and if they don't like him a bit better than they do Becky, their old nurse, it is because they could not possibly like anybody better than her, except their mother.

For Becky has nursed and petted them, and perhaps rather spoilt them, ever since they can remember. She was their mother's nurse, too, when their mother was no bigger than Olive is now ; and often, when they are tired of playing, she tells them stories about her that make them laugh sometimes, and sometimes make them cry, but always make them love Becky the more, for it is so clear to them that their mother must have loved her very much indeed when she was only little, like them.

Now, between ourselves, it is no use pretending that Becky is handsome. She isn't to look at, anyhow. Her figure is as bumpy and shapeless as a feather bed, but she has the softest, kindest old heart in the world, and whatever makes Olive or Tony happy or sorry makes her happy or sorry, for she thinks as much of them as if they were both her very own. I daresay she has half persuaded herself that, in some way, they are ; and certainly, on their part, they feel that she belongs to them,

and that they are more hers now than anyone else's, till their mother comes home again.

So it has come to pass that they have grown up in these last two years timidly avoiding the hasty-tempered, beautiful Aunt Prue who avoids them and calls them a nuisance, but finding a wonderful comfort in their imaginings of the gentle, perfect, far-off mother who is continually writing letters to them from the other side of the world; who is faded to a dear, shadowy dream in their remembrances, and lives in their dreamings of her as the good angel who watches over them, so that when anything goes wrong and they are at all unhappy they can tell each other comfortably that she is sure to find out about it, and it will be all right and nothing will ever go wrong with them any more when she is better and comes back to them.

In the meantime, they get a good deal of comfort also from the visible and substantial presence of Becky.

If you want to know exactly what Becky is like, look on the advertisement hoardings in the streets at the picture of the stout, solid, homely old lady wearing a large flapping bonnet and carrying a tureen full of Edwards' Desiccated Soup, and recommending everybody to "try it." My own opinion is that the

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artist who drew that picture saw Becky out of doors one day and copied her whilst she wasn't looking. At all events, that's Becky's likeness. Olive and Tony were struck by it and thought so too, until they mentioned it to her; but she disagreed with them and was positive and certain that she was nicer looking than that, so they altered their minds about it and said she was, just so as not to hurt her feelings.

"I don't say," Becky admitted justly, "that I'm a beauty. I'm not such a silly as that. I never was nothing like so pretty as your mother is, of course——"

"Oh, no!" Olive was unnecessarily emphatic; but added soothingly, "You are nicer than Aunt Prue, though, Becky, aren't you?"

"Not nicer looking, if that's what you mean, deary," said Becky, truthfully. "Your dear mother has the face of a sweet angel—the loveliest face I ever see!" Olive nodded approval of this to Tony, and Becky went on, "Your Aunt Prue's lovely enough, I will say that, but—well, I'd sooner be ugly; I'm thankful I'm not like her!"

"So am I, Becky," cried Olive fervently.

And Tony said so was he.

A small, sturdy youngster, Tony is, quick, bright-

BECKY



"I DON'T SAY," BECKY ADMITTED JUSTLY, "THAT I'M A BEAUTY."

eyed, and a little inclined to mischief; he is their father's favourite, I think, but Aunt Prue has even less affection for him than for Olive—he is more troublesome and disobedient, she says, and she wonders his father is not more severe with him, and tries to make up for it by being more severe with him herself.

That is why Olive, who loves Tony entirely and unselfishly and is maybe rather fanciful, had a dreadful dream one night in which Aunt Prue came like a witch and turned into a dragon and, looking very angry and wicked, snatched Tony away and carried him off, and then, when she ran hard and overtook them, beat him cruelly before her eyes until he lay white and still and dead, and she was so frightened and heartbroken that she woke crying, and sat up in the dark and called till she woke Tony and he answered her sleepily, and she knew he was safe, and it was nothing more than a dream.

They sleep in two cosy little rooms that are next to each other and open out of the nursery. Becky's room is outside, just across the landing; and she was disturbed by Olive calling out like that, and came in with a candle and sat on the edge of the bed and, instead of scolding her, put her

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arms round her and said she must never let herself be terrified so again, for though Aunt Prue was not married and did not care for children she was not really cruel and would surely never do either of them any harm.

And I don't suppose she would, either. She might speak sharply and harshly occasionally, and she has never spoken to them so pleasantly or made such pets of them as Becky always does, but she never went so far as to lift her hand to either of them, except once. Then, certainly, it was to Tony; and the night she struck him was the very same night in which Olive and he went through the amazing adventures I am going to tell you about.

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE OF THE NIGHT

Becky was telling them stories; it was bedtime, and the nursery was nearly dark.

Tony sat hunched on a hassock, staring at dream-pictures in the red deeps of the fire; Olive from her favourite seat in the window was looking out on the long street where the snow lay white and shining under the stars, that were just beginning to twinkle sleepily; both of them were listening to the leisurely, comfortable voice of Becky as she told of the awful cruelty of Bluebeard, the happy awakening of the Sleeping Beauty, the sorrows of the Swan Princes, and old stories of that sort that will never grow old enough to die.

"I've told you all of them so often, my pretties, I wonder you're not tired of hearing them," she said, at last.

But they cried out that they were not, and begged for another.

"Not to-night, dearies," pleaded Becky. "It's past bedtime, and you know how angry your Auntie is if she finds I've let you sit up late."

Tony sighed, and stared more intently into the fire ; and Olive continued to gaze silently out of the window, as if it had been a magic window and she was not merely looking into the white street below, but could see from it all the stranger cities and people that Becky had been talking of.

She was sitting there, in the window, on a big, old-fashioned oak chest that had the City of London arms carved on the front of it and gilded, so that the two rampant griffins, putting out their tongues at each other over the shield and helmet they were guarding, showed boldly against the dark background and, flashing and gleaming in the flickering firelight, seemed to be continually starting forward and drawing back, as if they were alive and trying to dodge one another. Now, this oak chest had belonged to the children's great-grandfather, Sir Christopher, who had been Lord Mayor of London : that is why the City arms were on the front of it. And perhaps that is why Olive, who had heard a good deal of her great-grandfather and was old enough to think of such things, thought so much about the City and took such a personal



"ISN'T ANYBODY AT ALL OUT?" TONY CHIMED IN,

interest in it that she had come to feel as if, in a peculiar and particular way, it belonged to her and Tony, and they belonged to it.

"I do so wish, Becky dear," she began presently, with a sigh, "that you would tell us what it is like in the City all night long whilst everybody is gone home and asleep in bed. I don't mean in our streets just here, but right down in the real City where father goes to business and where great-grandfather, Sir Christopher, was Lord Mayor."

"Ah, now, don't you start a-worritin' about that agen, my pet," said Becky persuasively. "You're always dreamin' and a-fidgetin' about that, and haven't I told ye scores and scores of times it's all exactly like it is in the daytime, only it's dark?"

"Yes, but I mean there's nobody there, is there, Becky, like there is in the day? Everybody is at home in bed?"

"And so they ought to be, my lamb," declared Becky conclusively.

"Isn't anybody at all out?" Tony chimed in.

"How should there be, my dears, when the shops and places are shut up and there's nowhere for anyone to go to, and it's all dark?"

"Not quite, quite dark, Becky," urged Olive,

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"because there are the lamps, you know, Becky, aren't there?"

"Oh, the lamps are alight, yes."

"And aren't there even any wicked people stopping out, Becky?" inquired Tony.

"What's the good," Becky put it to him, "when all the good people have gone home and there's nobody left for them to rob and kill?"

"But what is the use of wasting the lamplights, though, Becky," Olive enquired thoughtfully, "if everybody's at home and doesn't want them?"

"Why, so's the policeman can look round and make positive and sure that nobody is there."

"But the policeman has a nice little lamp of his own," Tony objected; "I saw him shining it once."

"Oh, deary me! Don't ask me another word about it!" cried Becky, a little impatiently. "You must not bother me with such a pack of silliness any more. It doesn't matter what the streets are like when nobody's in them. You wait till you grow up, Olive, my dear, and then, if you want to, you can go out one fine night and see them for yourself."

"It will be such a long, long time, Becky, before I grow up," said Olive wistfully. "I have been in the City in the daytime. Mother took me

one day, you know, before she was ill, when I was very little; and you took both of us once, Becky, didn't you? We saw London Bridge and Trafalgar Square—"

"And the Horse Guards," interrupted Tony, "and the British Museum."

"Yes, and I have seen ever so many pictures of it, and somehow," Olive continued, "I would so love to see just what it is like when it is quiet and dark and nobody out of doors—it must look so different. I think, Becky, I shall get up one night and slip out very quietly, without waking anybody, and go all by myself, and see it. Oh, it would be so lovely!"

"You will do nothing of the sort, Miss Olive!" Becky spoke rather severely. "You know you won't. Your mother wouldn't like you to, and you'd never do anything to grieve her, dearie, would you?"

Olive did not answer, and for a minute they were all silent.

The firelight rose and fell; and every time it rose Becky could be clearly seen in the big arm-chair; and Tony on the hassock, with his feet on the fender, his chin in his hands, his elbows on his knees; and Olive on the oak chest, gazing dreamily

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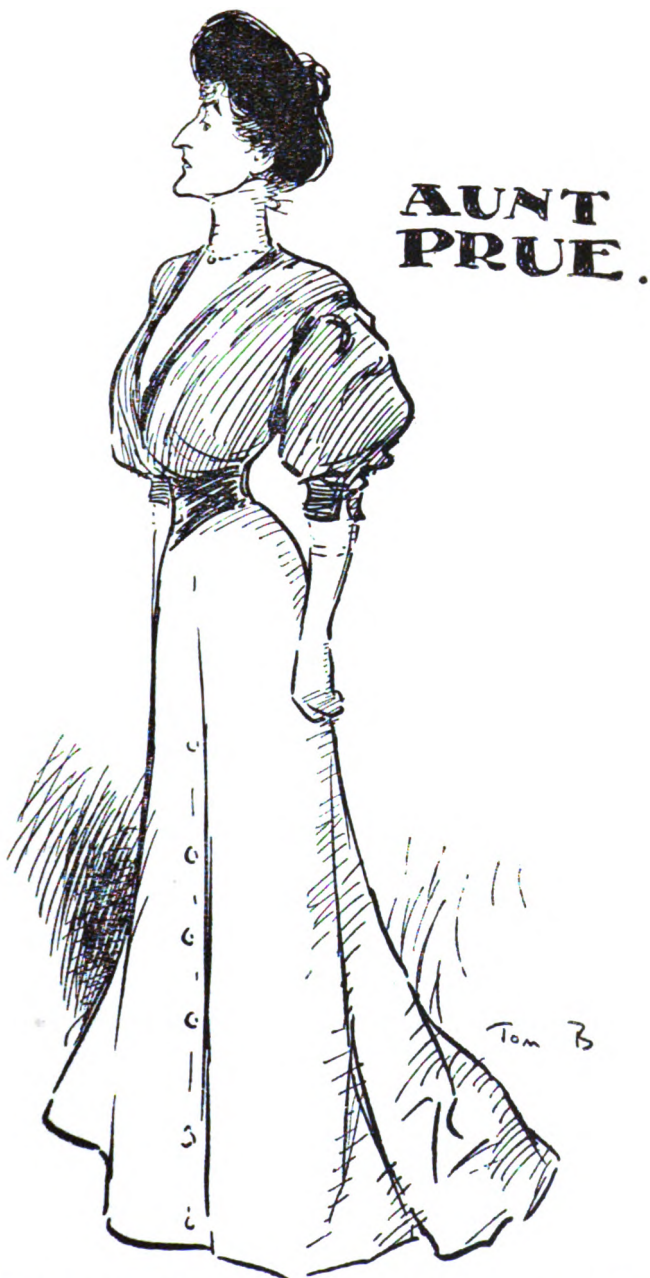
out of the window. And every time it fell Becky vanished into the black depths of the armchair, Tony and Olive faded instantly to dim shadows, and other dimmer shadows came out from all parts of the room and leaned forward as if they were whispering to them, or listening for them to speak again.

"If mother was here, Becky," said Olive with a suspicion of tears in her voice, "and knew how much I do so want to go, she would take me herself, I'm sure she would.

Becky gave in at once, and was remorseful.

"There, there! Becky's getting old and cross, my pretty," she said, "but it's only her way, and she loves you always—you both of you know that she does! Really and really, I can't tell you much about your great-grandfather's City that you don't know, sweetheart. I've seen little enough of it by day, and next to nothing at all of it by night, but I'll tell you what we will do—I'll try to remember a song I once heard about it and sing you that. There must be no more songs or stories afterwards, though; you must both go to bed then, quick, or if your Auntie happens to come up to us, like she did last week——!"

The black shadow of Tony turned on the hassock



**AUNT
PRUE.**

"IF YOUR AUNTIE HAPPENS TO COME UP TO US, LIKE SHE DID LAST WEEK—!"

THE PEOPLE OF THE NIGHT 37

and looked at the black shadow of Becky in the chair and at the silhouette of Olive against the grey square of the window; then, as the fire flashed up and they caught sight of the two griffins dodging and darting on the front of the chest, and could see each other for a moment, before they became shadows again, Becky began to croon her song of

WHEN THE WORLD'S ASLEEP

When the day is past and ended, and the daily tasks that men did
Have been laid aside unfinished till the dawn that comes too soon,
Children, then it is the playtime of whatever slept by daytime,
And the people of the darkness wake and live beneath the moon;
All day, every day in London, till they get what they've begun
done,

Busy workers fill the City, worrying, hurrying to and fro,
But when night is there, thereafter, Oh, the ghostly noise and
laughter

Of the folks who throng the streets and leave no footprints where they
go!

While the moon and the lamps are alight,
And there's none to look on at the sight,

Oh, what doings begin

When the world has gone in

And the sun has gone out for the night!

For the ghosts of all the fancies, all the thinkings and romances
That throughout the day were penned up in the busy brains of
men

Climb or break their high or low pen and escape into the open
And become as good as real in the quiet City then;
All the statues staid and solemn drop from pedestal and column,

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Stretch their stiffened limbs, and live and walk, and talk, like me and
you,
And the pictures from the hoardings, tired of lodging on their
boardings,
Move amongst them, loving, hating, just as daylight mortals do.

And, as mists that from the sea rose, lovely heroines and heroes,
Who are all day shut in volumes put away on dusty shelves,
Youths and maidens, happy lovers, blithely rising from their covers,
Meet and baffle dreadful villains who are roaming like themselves ;
Fays, whose home for evermore is in the realm of fairy stories,
Gnomes, and elves, and little people who have made us laugh and
weep,
Dreams, that are but empty seeming until we ourselves are dreaming,
Come to life and fill the City, when the world is all asleep.

While the moon and the lamps are alight,
And there's none to look on at the sight,
Oh, what doings begin
When the world has gone in
And the sun has gone out for the night.

CHAPTER III

OLIVE STARTS ON HER ADVENTURES

"Isn't there some more, Becky?" cried Tony.
"Do sing it over again, please."

But Olive said nothing; she was thinking, and dreaming of it.

The long, snow-white, lamp-lighted street below was fantastically changed before her eyes, and seemed like a dream-street in a world of magic. The people flitting up and down it, little and dim and strange in the dark spaces between the lamps, and bursting into sudden size and clearness for a moment as they passed under the light, did not look like the ordinary people you see walking about in the daytime, yet of course they must have been, for it was still too early for the real grown-up people to be gone to bed.

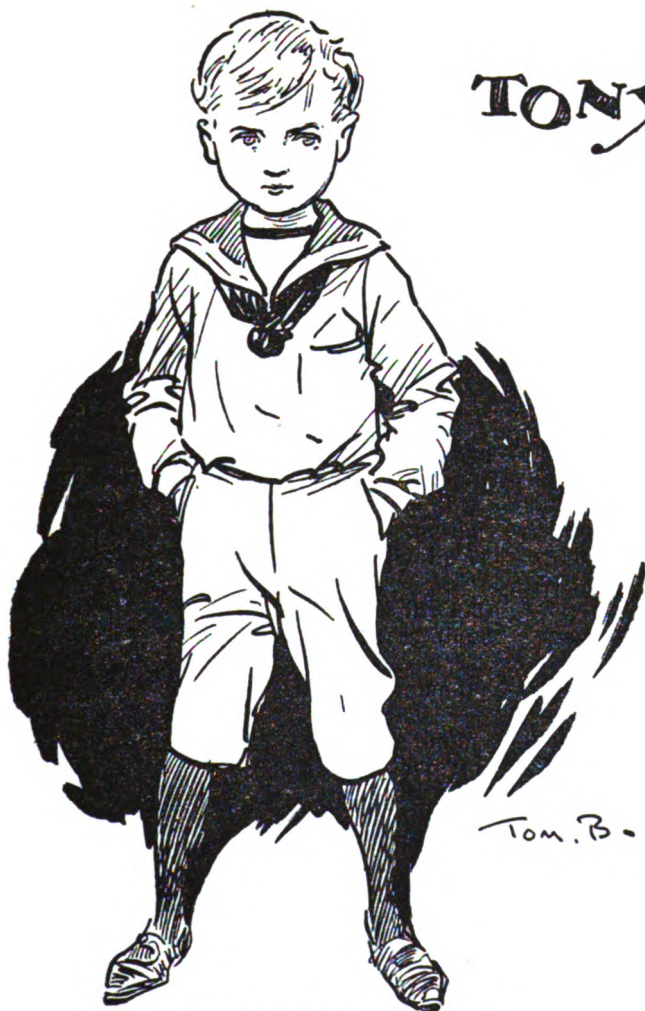
Nevertheless, as Olive watched them from high up at her window they appeared to be all the while changing and altering in a most bewildering

manner; one minute they were quite real, and the next they were not; one minute they would dwindle to grotesque, mysterious shapes among the shadows, and the next they would come out into the lamp-light and turn into themselves again; so that one way and another, though she did not altogether believe what Becky had been singing, she felt that it might possibly be true to some extent, so she didn't altogether disbelieve it either.

"Not again to-night," said Becky firmly. "Now, come, there's my dearies, to bed at once, or we shall be getting into trouble." She rose to light the gas, which drove all the shadows out of the room immediately and left it just a plain, matter-of-fact nursery with nothing wonderful in it anywhere. "Come, my chicks! And Becky'll stay and tuck you both up cosy before she goes down to supper."

"Catch me first, then, Becky!" and Tony darted across the room in a twinkling from right under the hand she stretched out to him. "Catch me, and then I'll go."

"Ah, you young rascal!" Becky shook a reproachful finger at him, but smiled with every crease and wrinkle in her good, red, double-chinned visage. "I'm too short o' breath for such rompins, and you're gettin' too spry on your feet for me."



"CATCH ME FIRST THEN, BECKY!"

OLIVE STARTS ON HER ADVENTURES 43

But even whilst she spoke she had been warily approaching, with an artful pretence of innocence that you would never have thought her capable of; she pounced with startling unexpectedness, large, heavy and awkward, but astonishingly agile, and Tony only evaded her by a hair's breadth, ducking and dodging, and slipping off close under her outspread arms again, laughing and screaming with excitement.

The temptation to join in the game was irresistible; Olive slid from the chest, and the next instant she and Tony were circling and dodging round and across the room, running into and tumbling over each other, and crawling and leaping and whirling away from the long, sweeping clutches of Becky, who, entering fully into the spirit of the thing, romped mightily after them, puffing and perspiring, but as nimble sometimes and as joyous always as if she had been nearly as young as they were.

The noisy, headlong chase was at its wildest and noisiest when, all of a sudden, the door opened—and Aunt Prue was in the room.

She paused and drew herself up, angry and indignant; her eyes glistened more coldly than the diamonds at her throat, and something of their coldness was in the hard lines at the corners of her

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mouth, and in her clear, cutting tones when she spoke.

"What is the meaning of this shameful bedlam? These children should have been in bed an hour ago. I have had to complain of this before, Becky, and I will not allow it. Your mistress may let you do as you choose; she may be home to-morrow, and I am very thankful; but so long as I am here, I will be obeyed!" Her fierce, quick anger was roused, and she fairly quivered with passion. "Such disgraceful uproar and disorder.—And which of you children broke the dining-room window to-day? The servants pretend to know nothing about it, but I am certain from their manners that it is one of you—which of you did it? I insist on being told!"

She was very stately and very beautiful, but looked very terrible to Olive and Tony as she posed in the doorway, her strong, handsome features darkened with anger, and a fury that was near to hatred ablaze in her eyes. The first glimpse of her had subdued Becky as well as the children, and all three stood silent and abashed before her.

"I am very sorry," faltered Tony; "I ran into the dining-room after my ball, and—and—and I just bounced it there once and—"



HER WHITE HAND SHOT OUT LIKE A LIGHTING FLASH.

OLIVE STARTS ON HER ADVENTURES 47

"You had no right in there after anything. You are for ever in mischief, and you know you are not to go into the dining-room. I told you the last time you——"

For a single instant she seemed to be caught up into such a frenzy that she lost control of herself. They had all stopped short on her appearance, Tony within touch of her, and in that instant of irritation her white hand shot out like a lightning-flash, and Tony, with his hand to his cheek, staggered under the force of it.

He was too startled to cry out; it was Olive who screamed. The crisp sound of the blow broke the spell that had held them motionless, and she sprang to Tony's side in an ecstasy of pity and defiance, and folding the little fellow in her arms held him protectingly against her.

But Aunt Prue's wrath had burnt itself out; it went as it came, like a flash of lightning; and perhaps she was sharply ashamed to have lost her dignity and self-restraint. She gazed on them stonily; then, without another word, drew back and shut the door on herself with a bang.

It had all happened in a couple of minutes; and when it was over it seemed as unlikely and as terrifying as a nightmare.

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There was no more thought of play, nothing but tears and the comforting whisperings of Becky and Olive, and Tony's piteous sobs. And presently, when they were in bed, Becky went from one to the other of them tucking them in, and petting and fondling them, until they were quieted. She sat with Tony till he was asleep; then she came to Olive again and let her cling to her and have her cry out.

"Oh, I shall be so glad when mother is home!" she sobbed; "she would never be so cruel to us, even if we were doing wrong, Becky, would she?"

"There now, dearie—no, that she never would," said Becky, who was almost crying, too. "And she will be here very, very soon now, you know. She is on the way, and there might be a telegram late to-night or in the morning to say that she will be here to-morrow; and won't it be good, my pretty, to have her back, quite strong and well again and all just like it used to be!"

"Oh, yes, and I am so glad, Becky. And if Aunt Prue tells her about Tony you don't think she will be very angry, will she?"

"Of course she won't."

"Not even with me if she knew I had said I would get up one night and slip out quietly and see the City

by myself when you and everybody were asleep ? ”

“ Not a bit ! Why, no, for I believe you’re right, my dear, and if she knew how you’d set your heart on it, she’d let you go—yes, and she’d go with you herself to see that you didn’t lose the way.”

Then, remarking that if she stayed there talking it would only keep Olive awake, Becky kissed her good-night once more, turned out the gas, and left her in the dark.

But still Olive could not sleep.

She lay there thinking how good it was her mother would so soon be home ; thinking, thinking, thinking of all sorts of things, but particularly of what Becky had sung about the City at night ; and the more she thought the more she longed to go out and see it all. She even began to amuse herself by making believe that she was lying awake on purpose until the house was sound asleep, and that then, this very night, she would get up and dress, and creep out without letting anyone hear her, and be back before her mother came and, indeed, before anybody was astir in the morning. She was the least bit nervous at the idea of going alone, and it was just then, whilst she was wishing very much indeed that her mother had come and was taking her, that an extraordinary thing occurred.

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The moony, misty light that shone in at the curtained window grew strangely brighter, and Olive was surprised, but not afraid, to see that somebody was in the room: a gentle, womanly figure that came without a sound and leaned above her to find if she was awake; and she was gladder than ever then that she had not given way to the sleepiness that had tried hard to shut her eyes, for she knew that this was her mother, who must have arrived home sooner than they had expected her—she knew somehow, that it was her mother, before she could see her face, and directly she saw her face she recognised her.

A cry of wonder and delight was rising to her lips, but her mother motioned her to be silent, so as not to disturb the rest of the household, took her gently by the hand, helped her out of bed, and helped her to dress. There was no need to ask any questions; Olive guessed easily where she was going to take her—most likely she had been talking to Becky—and she was eager to be off.

“May we take Tony?” she whispered. “He would so like to come too.”

Her mother smiled, and nodded; and Olive led the way to Tony’s room and woke him. He was rather startled, but Olive explained everything to

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him in hurried whispers, and he was up and dressed before she had finished.

Then, she took one of her mother's hands, and Tony took the other, and they stepped very, very softly down the dark staircase together, and out into the street.

CHAPTER IV

THE TROUBLES OF P.C.I½

The night air was clear and not cold, and, which struck Olive as especially singular, the snow felt as soft and warm to her feet as if it had been merely a white carpet. The electric lamps made the main thoroughfares as light almost as day; but the by-ways lying dim and hushed, blinking their sleepy lamps hazily, seemed as if they knew more than they ought to, and were so full of slyness and secrecy that they might have been mysterious hiding places from which all manner of unknown and impossible things would rush noiselessly out behind you, as soon as you had turned your back on them.

That is what Olive thought; and she was so absorbed in thinking it that she did not notice their mother leave them, and was somewhat perplexed by-and-by to find it was Tony's hand she was holding, and they were walking, the two of them, alone.

Nobody was with them that they could see, anyhow; they felt lost and looked very small in the big streets, and the wonder was that they didn't make mistakes about the turnings and wander into obscure places that they could not get out of and where nobody would ever have found them any more.

But Olive was not afraid; she reckoned that their mother would not have left them to go on by themselves if there had been any danger; and after they had walked and walked quite a long way, they found they had passed through the City and arrived near to London Bridge, without meeting anyone, for it was not far from midnight by now, and naturally everybody was gone indoors. But when they came within sight of London Bridge, close by King William's statue there, they met a real live man.

He was a policeman.

He was a large policeman, too, tall and heavy and solid looking, with a solemn face that had a fringe of sandy whiskers under the chin, and no moustache.

"Now then!" he called, catching sight of them as they loitered to stare at him. "Pass along there, please! Move on there!"

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They felt scared at first, he spoke so sharply and suddenly. Tony whispered that perhaps they had better move on and pass along as he wanted them to, because he seemed bad-tempered and might lock them up if they didn't; but Olive went nearer and addressed him persuasively.

"If you please, sir, we are not doing any harm," she said. "We have only come to see the people who are out in the street all night, but we can't find any."

He pulled a big watch from his pocket and frowned at it.

"You're too early," he replied. "They won't be out for another five minutes yet, thank goodness!"

"Don't you like them?" asked Olive, judging by his manner that he did not. "Aren't they very nice people?"

"Nice!" he laughed scornfully. "You won't like them either, missy, when you've had half as much worry with them as I have. Now, you take my advice and hurry home, and don't have nothing at all to do with them."

"They wouldn't hurt us, would they?" queried Tony.

"You wouldn't let them, would you?" said Olive trustingly. "We shan't get in anyone's way. We

only came just because we did so want to see what it was all like here at night-time."

"What for?"

"Oh—why—you see, it used to belong to us once," explained Olive.

"What did?"

"The City."

The policeman eyed her severely.

"Our great-grandfather, Sir Christopher, you know," Olive went on candidly, "used to be Lord Mayor."

The policeman's manner altered; he drew himself up and saluted.

"Beg pardon, missy," he said. "If you'd informed me sooner, I shouldn't have ordered you to move on or pass along. Why, of course I'll look after you. You'll be safe enough with me. I'll conduct you wherever you wish to go; that's my duty, that is, you belonging to the City and the City bein', as you might say, partly yours. Gog and Magog will be here in a minute or two, and they will look after you as well. Any relation of a Lord Mayor is entitled to expect it from them."

"Oh, thank you; you are very kind," cried Olive joyously; and as he really did seem a rather superior man she added doubtfully, "Are you a sergeant?"

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"No, missy," he said discontentedly; "but I ought to be."

"But you're not just a plain policeman, though, are you?"

"Why, thanky, missy," he coughed, and she thought he was blushing, "I ain't the man to boast of it, but I'm not near so plain as some of 'em are, and that's a fact."

"I mean you are not a common policeman," Olive corrected herself.

"Oh, if you come to that, none of 'em are in the City, miss," he remarked, with a mortified air.

"You look more than that—that is what I meant," added Olive. "What is your name?"

"We don't have no names. I'm not a sergeant, I'm not a common policeman, and I haven't got no name. I'm down on the books as $1\frac{1}{2}$," he said somewhat bitterly.

"Dear me! But why is that?"

"Becos I am $1\frac{1}{2}$, miss, that's why."

"One and a half! How peculiar!" Olive was puzzled. "What—what have they done with the other half, then?"

"Oh, we don't waste nothing in the City, except money and time," he said darkly; "it goes towards

making up another policeman, that does."

It sounded curious, but evidently he was not joking; Olive saw on his collar in little metal letters and figures exactly as things are ticketed in shop windows: "P.C.1½," so it must have been true; and, as a matter of fact, he looked quite large enough for two policemen.

She would have questioned him further, but at this point there was a sudden stir in the air, and a clock began to strike.

"Twelve! Now's the time!" exclaimed P.C.1½. "Now you'll see 'em, missy."

He glanced round, and following the direction of his gaze Olive and Tony perceived that he was eyeing an extensive hoarding round a new building at the back of the statue of King William. There were a lot of advertisements on this hoarding, some with pictures and several without. Four of them were large pictures: one was a life-size portrait of Sunny Jim, leaping over a fence to show how strong you could grow if you ate nothing but the sort of food he advertised; one was the portrait of an elderly Quaker gentleman carrying a scroll of blank paper in his left hand and advertising the Oats that he had been fed on himself; another was of the beautiful Tatcho Girl, who advertised a Hair Re-

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storer and was lying back languidly in her picture on the hoarding with her black hair flowing loose all about her; and the fourth was that likeness of Becky, the Desiccated Soup old lady, holding a soup tureen.

Olive was familiar with them all, and was glancing at them quite indifferently, counting the strokes of the clock, when, just as the twelfth sounded—she could hardly believe her eyes—Sunny Jim flew clean over the fence and came down flat on his feet on the pavement; the elderly Quaker gentleman, easily detaching himself from the hoarding, stepped gravely after him, and the Desiccated Soup old lady, leaving a great gap in the paper where she had come from, followed their example and then went first to one, then to the other of them, hospitably offering her tureen and, in Becky's homely, comfortable tones, inviting them each to "try it."

Even the little pictures of men and women and animals tore themselves out of their posters and ran off, this way and that, with sounds of laughter and chattering, happy in their freedom. The only one who did not leave the hoarding was the beautiful Tatcho Girl. She lay back still, silent and motionless, as if she were the only one amongst them who was nothing more than a picture, and so could



WENT FIRST TO ONE, THEN TO THE OTHER OF THEM, HOSPITABLY OFFERING HER TUREEN.

never be alive and come down like the rest.

Roused from her wondering by the sound of something heavy dropping close beside her, Olive beheld a large, dirty-white gentleman standing proudly at her elbow: his face and clothes and boots were all the same drab shade; he had a stiff, stony appearance that caused her to lift her eyes instinctively to the top of the pedestal in the middle of the road, and she noticed with a queer shock that the statue was gone from it. Undoubtedly, this smeary white gentleman with no hat on was King William IV. and he was at liberty to walk the streets after midnight, as the pictures from the posters were.

"I thought perhaps it might be like this," gasped Olive; "but I don't think I could ever have believed it—not really and really, if I had not seen it."

Tony simply clung to her hand, too bewildered to speak.

"Oh, it's like this every night," grumbled P.C.1½, "and I can't understand why Parliament or the Corporation doesn't do something to put a stop to it. It oughtn't to be allowed. It doesn't give a policeman any chance at all. Here we have to be out all night in all weathers, and can never stand out of the way and have a nap in a quiet corner

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because there's all these people to be looked after and kept on moving—and a nice lot they are, and a nice lot of looking after they want, too, I give you my word! They've got more young policemen into trouble than all the live varmints that ever was born!"

"They seem harmless," Olive ventured to demur.

"So does everything that isn't. That's their artfulness. Some of them ain't so bad as others, but—well, look here, have you noticed the Stower's Lime Juice pictures? There's a raging savage with a bottle of the juice in one of them, and a quiet savage with another bottle of the juice in the other; and directly it's twelve they're real savages and they come off with their bottles and go ramping about clubbing each other with 'em."

"But one of them is quite a quiet savage," Tony reminded him.

"So long as he's a picture," $1\frac{1}{2}$ agreed, "because then he can't help it, but once he comes off he's as mad as the other one and enjoys hisself. There's that gent too on the Dewar's Whiskey poster, pulling a cork out of a bottle. Well, directly it strikes twelve he's real and it's all real, and he gets the cork out and there's a lot of trouble with him. I'm used to him, and take no notice.

But he often misleads young policemen. They come across him after he's finished the bottle and order him to be quiet and go home, and of course he won't. So the young new policeman runs him in and locks him up for creating a disturbance. I know a young constable as locked him up and four others of these people all in the same night: there was the Lazenby Sauce Cook and the Bird's Custard Powder Cook—they always have a set-to every night the moment they leave off being pictures—there was one of Stower's Savages, and one of the Allsopp's Lager gentlemen, because they will keep that motor-car of theirs broke down in the middle of Cheapside whilst they crawl under and all round it looking for their refreshments.

“Well, he locked all that lot up, one after the other, and what happens? There's five prisoners in five cells, with charges against 'em in the books, miss, but at sunrise they've stopped being real and are back on the hoardings, turned into pictures again in the course of nature, as it might be. Consequently, in the morning, there's five empty cells. The young policeman couldn't account for it. Nobody could, except one officer who was an old, experienced hand like me. He was sorry to see the young peeler get into disgrace through

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ignorance, so he went to the Commissioner of Police and explained the facts, just the same as you and me, miss, can see them here to-night; and the Commissioner didn't believe him, but had his bumps felt and give him a certificate for it and shut him up in a padded cell. That was a warning to me. I've been careful not to tell the truth ever since."

"Oh, but aren't there any nice ones at all?" asked Olive.

"Not many," said $1\frac{1}{2}$. "There's that Sanitas Dragon—he's not such a bad sort when you get to know him. He's all prickly, like his picture, and every time he opens his mouth fire comes out of him, but he can't help that. He ain't like the Griffin. He's very good-hearted, and I've known him to cry because people don't fancy him and run away when he wants to go and rub hisself affectionate up against their legs. I used to run away from him myself when I was young. But not now. I like to have him with me now, especially in the winter. Many's the frosty night when he's sat up friendly in front of me smiling and breathing fire and me warming my hands at it; and many's the time I've hotted up my can of coffee over him quicker than if he'd been a spirit-stove. Oh, yes, he's harmless and useful, but, as a



"I'VE HOTTED MY CAN OF COFFEE OVER HIM QUICKER THAN IF HE'D BEEN A SPIRIT-STOVE."

E

rule, I don't say a word about all this to anyone, and don't you either, miss—or you, young master—or they'll only say you're telling wicked stories and—Oh, excuse me, miss.”

He broke off with extraordinary abruptness, and sprang furiously on a wild, timid-looking man who came tiptoeing cautiously past them whilst he was speaking; he sprang on him and grasped him roughly by the collar, and shook him till his eyes rolled and his teeth rattled in his head. They were immense round eyes too, with much more white than black in them; the sort of eyes that would make a man look frightened even if he was not. His long black hair wanted combing, his face looked as if it hadn't been shaved for a week nor washed for a month, and his clothes were as ragged as a scarecrow's.

“Now, then! Haven't you had enough warnings, eh?” snarled 1½. “Don't you know how to read, eh? Why can't you keep out of the way, then? You'll come out once too often, and you'll see what you'll get, and you won't like it. See?”

He kept shaking him all the while, and at every question shook him extra hard.

“What have I done?” whimpered the wretched object breathlessly. “Why can't you let me alone?”

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"What right have you to be let alone?" demanded $1\frac{1}{2}$ indignantly. "Who do you think you are, eh?"

"I've never done no harm. I've never done nothing to nobody," whined the miserable creature abjectly, "and this is all I get for it!"

"And what do you expect to get?" retorted $1\frac{1}{2}$. "Why can't you obey the law like everybody else, and do what you're told, eh?"

He could not answer, for $1\frac{1}{2}$ was shaking him with such increasing fury that Olive dreaded every moment to see his head roll right off his shoulders.

"Oh, please don't hurt him!" she pleaded. "What has he done?"

"Done?" panted $1\frac{1}{2}$. "He's defied the law. That's what he's done. He's always at it. He's Bill Stickers, miss; that's who he is."

"Bill Stickers?"

The name seemed curiously familiar, and Olive felt sure she had seen the man before, but could not think where, till it flashed across her all of a sudden that he was the tramp off the Pear's Soap poster,—the one who is writing to say he used some of the soap once upon a time and since then has used no other.

"Yes, miss. I dessay you've seen his name about. The Guvment an the County Council and all

the District Councils go to no end of expense to warn him an' caution him, but it's no good, he won't behave himself. He knows what to expect, and yet here he is, you see, always coming out where I can't help seeing him," said I $\frac{1}{2}$ warmly. "What's the use of giving him hints like 'Bill Stickers beware!' or 'Bill Stickers will be Prosecuted'? He's that owdacious he comes gettin' in my way a-purpose to aggravate me."

"But why do they want to prosecute him?" enquired Olive. "He says he has not done anything."

"No, but that's just where it is—he ought to, miss. What right's he to do nothing, when better men than him's doing all sorts of things? If they was all like him there'd be no need for any policemen, and then what's to become of me? He's that selfish he don't care what happens to me! Oh, I haven't got no patience with such cold-blooded artfulness?"

Olive regarded the wretched Bill reproachfully, but saw that slow tears were trickling down his grimy cheeks and she could not help feeling a little sorry for him.

"Do let him go this once," she begged. "Perhaps he will try to do something if you give him another chance; won't you, Mr. Stickers?"

But taking a mean advantage of 1½'s attention being diverted from him by Olive's appeal, Bill Stickers suddenly, and without a sign of gratitude to her, gave his miserable body a wriggle, a squirm, and a wrench, slipped from his captor's clutch, and dashed off headlong, all a mass of whirling hair and flutterings rags.

"Wait here, miss. Don't go," ejaculated 1½.
"Back in two ticks!"

And away he pelted in pursuit.



DASHED OFF HEADLONG, ALL A MASS OF WHIRLING HAIR AND FLUTTERING RAGS.

CHAPTER V

THE ROMANCE OF BLUEBEARD AND THE PRINCESS PEARL

"I've spoken to you twice," said Sunny Jim, with an offended air, "but you don't listen to me."

He had been walking up and down in gloomy thought, but paused and looked on vacantly whilst P.C.1½ was busy with Bill Stickers; and now, seeing that Olive and Tony were alone and were inclined to take more interest in the Desiccated Soup old lady than in himself, he addressed them with a kind of jealous bitterness.

"I see you don't know me," he added moodily. "Nobody ever does now."

"Oh, yes I do!" Olive assured him. "I have seen you on the hoardings ever so many times."

"So have I," Tony chimed in joyously. "You're Sunny Jim."

"Sunny Jim!" he laughed scornfully, fondled the tuft of hair on top of his bald head, stroked his smooth-shaven chin, rolled up his eyes and murmured

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brokenly to himself, "Sunny Jim! That's what I've come to. Sunny Jim!"

"But aren't you?" Olive asked him.

"I suppose you would think me mad," he said sharply, "if I told you I was Bluebeard?"

They clasped hands and stared at him blankly, not liking to irritate him by saying what they did think.

"It's the truth, though," he resumed sadly. "I don't blame you for not recognising me. I don't look like myself, and I don't feel myself either. But that's who I am—I'm Bluebeard."

"But," stammered Tony, "but—you have not—not got any—"

"I know that," he interrupted. "I am not the man I used to be, and I don't expect I ever shall be any more. You've read about me, of course, in the story-books?"

"Yes," they cried in eager chorus.

"Of course you have. Everybody has. And do you believe it all?"

"Oh, yes," they said again.

"Yes!" he sighed. "Ah, well, I don't blame you. I blame the man who wrote it. Do you know who wrote it?"

"No," they said together.



"I SUPPOSE YOU WOULD THINK ME MAD," HE SAID SHARPLY, "IF I TOLD YOU I WAS BLUEBEARD?"

"Nobody does. I wish I could find out. I would bring an action for libel against him. It's a scandalous thing!" he smothered his anger and went on resignedly. "I am not blaming you. You are bound to believe what they print about me, but the truth is it's not true. It's a story. Come, now! Do I look like a married man? Tell me that! Would you take me for a brute—a ruffian who could cut a lady's head off?"

He pulled a handkerchief from his coat-tail pocket and wiped his eyes.

They assured him sympathetically that he did not look a bit like a man of that sort.

"No, and I'm not. I have never cut anybody's head off—never in all my life!" he declared earnestly. "They say I have had a lot of wives, don't they? Well, I haven't, then. That's another story. I have not been married yet—not even once. It's a cruel thing to say about me, and I'm terribly sensitive. Here is that story-teller making out that I married I don't know how many wives and cut all their heads off, and here's me, a member of the Royal Humane Society and a bachelor all the while! Ain't it wicked! It's ruined my reputation and made me seem such a loathsome character that I'm ashamed to be recognised and have to live

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like this under what they call an alias. I don't generally tell anyone who I really am, and I have only told you now because I feel more depressed than usual about it to-night."

He dabbed his eyes again, and sobbed.

"Did you shave your beard off, sir, so as to hide yourself?" asked Tony curiously.

"No," he said, controlling his emotion; "that's grief, that is. It fell out all through grief, same as my hair did. But I don't mind that; it helps to disguise me."

"Was it—was it really and truly blue?" Tony pressed him respectfully.

"It was true blue—a beautiful art shade," he said, trying not to seem proud about it. "But what's the use talking of it? It's gone now; fallen out all through grief—partly because of those disgraceful story-books and partly because I have had such a lot of dreadful disappointments."

"I am so sorry you have been disappointed," remarked Olive.

"So am I," he returned miserably; "but it was like this: When those story-books got about with my picture in and people read what they thought was my correct biography they struck me off their visiting lists and told the servants not to let me

in if I called at the door. It is what would happen to almost any man if he had his biography written, that's why most of them don't have it done till after they're dead. It wasn't true what they said of me; biographies are not meant to be; but was that my fault? Well, and yet everybody believed it and said I was very unkind. They said I was no gentleman, and if I ever asked a girl to marry me she screamed and fainted, and called for the police as soon as I'd brought her round. Isn't that enough to worry any man? And me a bachelor, mind you, and so thoughtful and affectionate that I wouldn't harm a fly!"

Olive said she was sure he wouldn't. She was not actually sure, but she could not bear to see him crying, and wanted to comfort him.

"I am one of the most affectionate men in the world," he continued. "I have been in love—Oh, twenty times or more—but no lady would ever promise to be more than a sister to me, and somehow I don't like sisters. Not if they're my own. I went down on my knees to them all—at different times—but they all said 'No.' They said they considered I had been married too often already. Awful, isn't it? Made me fret so, that my hair fell off and my beard fell out, and when I looked in the

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glass I didn't know myself; so I changed my name."

He burst into tears again, and Olive was so touched that she could hardly keep from crying herself.

"I am in love now, you know, worse than ever," he resumed, drying his eyes; "that's what upsets me."

"Doesn't the lady—doesn't she like you?" asked Olive gently.

"I don't know. I can't ask her."

"Why not?"

"She's under a spell," he said, irritably. "You know that as well as I do, don't you?"

"No," Olive faltered. "You did not mention who she was."

"Do you mean to tell me," remonstrated Bluebeard, "that you have never heard of the Sleeping Beauty?"

Of course Olive had heard of her; everybody has.

"So I should think, indeed," said Bluebeard. "Well, that's her; and here she is on the hoarding, here. Princess Pearl is her proper name, but they changed it to Tatcho, for short."

"It isn't so pretty as her other name," cried Olive. "What made them change it?"

"It changed itself, really," said Bluebeard. "Naturally it could not be always the same. Time changes all things. You'd know that if you had been to a good school and studied science."

"Oh, yes, I do know that," Olive told him. "I copy that for my writing lesson, but I thought it was only a motto."

"It isn't then; it's the truth."

"And you have not asked her—"

"How can I? She is the Sleeping Beauty; you can see that for yourself; and so long as she's up there fast asleep what is the good of asking her anything? You don't suppose she is the kind of lady who would talk in her sleep, do you?"

"No; but won't she ever wake up?"

"That depends. Do you think she's pretty?"

Olive moved a step or two nearer to the poster and gazed at the Tatcho Girl critically.

"I think she is just lovely!" she exclaimed.

"So do I," said Bluebeard. "That's why I am in love with her, but whilst she is only a picture all the time it makes it seem so hopeless, doesn't it?"

"But will she be a picture all the time?" enquired Olive. "Why is it that you and the others can wake up and come alive and Princess Pearl can't? Aren't you all under a spell?"

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"Not all under the same one. She has a special strong spell all to herself," Bluebeard explained. "The rest of us can break ours easily when it strikes twelve, but her's can never be broken until a man who loves her goes and kisses her."

"Oh, of course!" cried Olive delightedly. "That is like it is in the story. But in the story," she added shyly, "the Prince came and kissed her, and I thought she woke up out of her sleep long ago."

"So she did out of that one. But she's gone to sleep again. You can't expect her to keep awake all the time, and this is a new sleep," said Bluebeard, rather impatiently, "and she has never been woke up out of this one."

"Well, but if you love her, why don't you—"

"Do you think I haven't tried?" he interrupted fiercely.

"But why can't you? You might go and kiss her now. I won't look if—"

"The spell can't be broken unless she is kissed," said Bluebeard, "at precisely one in the morning; not a minute before or after."

"Ah, but if you loved her really and truly," Olive reproved him, "you would not be a minute late—"

"Who says I am?" he demanded hotly. "There you are! There you go again! I am always mis-

understood. People seem as if they can't tell the truth about me!"

"I thought that was what you meant," Olive apologised. "Why can't you kiss her in time, then?"

"You know the Oxo Bull? The one with the great big horns that advertises the condensed meat? You've seen him on the hoardings? Well, it's all through him and the Griffin. Have you seen the Griffin? Big, bristly, ugly brute putting his tongue out opposite the Law Courts in the Strand, as if he'd been having a taste of the law and was showing you what he thought of it!"

"I saw it there once," began Olive; but looking round as she spoke, she checked herself in alarm, and cried out, "Why, where's Tony? . . Tony! . . . Oh, dear, I have lost him!"

CHAPTER VI

THE TWO MR. P'S, AND SOME OTHERS

But she hadn't. He had only wandered off whilst she was chatting with Bluebeard, and she saw him now a little way up the street with the Desiccated Soup old lady who looked like Becky; they were talking with a stiff, rather stout, drab coloured elderly gentleman, who lolled in an armchair on wheels that another stiff, jointless, and equally drab gentleman was pushing slowly along.

"Tony!" Olive ejaculated, running up and catching him by the hand. "You should not leave me so. I thought I had lost you."

"I only came to speak to Becky," answered Tony, "and ask her who these gentlemen were. The one in the chair is Mr. Peabody from behind the Royal Exchange—"

"Oh, yes, I thought I knew him!" cried Olive.

"And the one pushing him is Mr. Peel—he comes from the top of Cheapside. Becky calls them,"



Tom Browne

"THE TWO MR. P'S."

Tony sunk his voice to a whisper, "the two Mr. P's; don't you, Becky?"

"He will call me Becky," chuckled the Desiccated Soup old lady, "but, bless him! one name's as good as another, and if it isn't mine, it might have been; so what's the odds?"

"I thought you were Becky, too," Olive admitted. "You are exactly like her."

"It's curious, then, that I'm not her," said the old lady, "but very likely we were changed at birth and she's me, and that would account for it. That's how it is, I expect, so you may as well call me Becky, for convenience. My own proper name is long and hard to spell, but it doesn't matter because I shall be changing it soon. How do you fancy the name of Peckwater?"

"It isn't very pretty," Olive hesitated, "but it sounds nice and good."

"Well, that will be mine after I have married him."

"Oh, but Becky, you said—Becky said she would never, never marry anybody!" cried Olive in consternation.

"Did she? Then that shows I can't be her, because I have accepted Mr. Peckwater and we are to be married directly the spirit moves him."

"Who is Mr. Peckwater?"

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"There he is, right behind you."

Olive turned quickly, and there was the demure Quaker Oats gentleman, who had come off the hoarding, holding his little blank scroll and listening to them placidly.

"I have been explaining that we are engaged," remarked Becky, "and that before long we are to be married."

"Yea, verily," said Mr. Peckwater.

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Peabody explosively. "Boy! Didn't you hear my question? Is this the sister you said you had come out with to-night, or is she only a poster girl off the hoardings?"

"She is my sister Olive, sir," said Tony.

"Then where's your manners? Why don't you introduce me to her, boy?" blustered Mr. Peabody.

"He's in a bad temper," Becky told them privately; "he generally is."

"Oh, but I thought he was good," whispered Olive.

"So he is, but his temper isn't," said Becky; "that's why he'd always sooner lose it than not."

"You would be worse tempered than I am," grumbled Mr. Peabody overhearing her, "if you had to sit out there all day in the open air, as I do, without a hat or an overcoat, such weather as this! Why, I'm continually catching fresh colds,"

he blew his nose violently and coughed; "and I can never get rid of any of them. I've got so many colds on me now that I've lost count of them. It has given me rheumatics in both legs too; that's why I can't walk. If Mr. Peel, here, did not come and wheel me about I should be stuck up behind the Royal Exchange all night as well as all day—"

"Yes, and it's no treat for me," Mr. Peel struck in gloomily. "I often wish they would break you up into kerbstones, or window-ledges, or something sensible like that. They ought to have had more sense than to make you sitting in a chair. It doesn't look nice, and so far as I am concerned you are nothing but a nuisance. I can never take a quiet stroll by myself. Here I am, night after night, pushing you along as if I were no better than a Bath-chairman—I, who was once a Prime Minister! Why, whenever we meet the Cobden statue from Camden Town he calls me the Nurse-maid, and he's cracked himself all over with laughing at me."

"Why do you do it so often?" Olive enquired. "Couldn't you take it in turns with somebody else?"

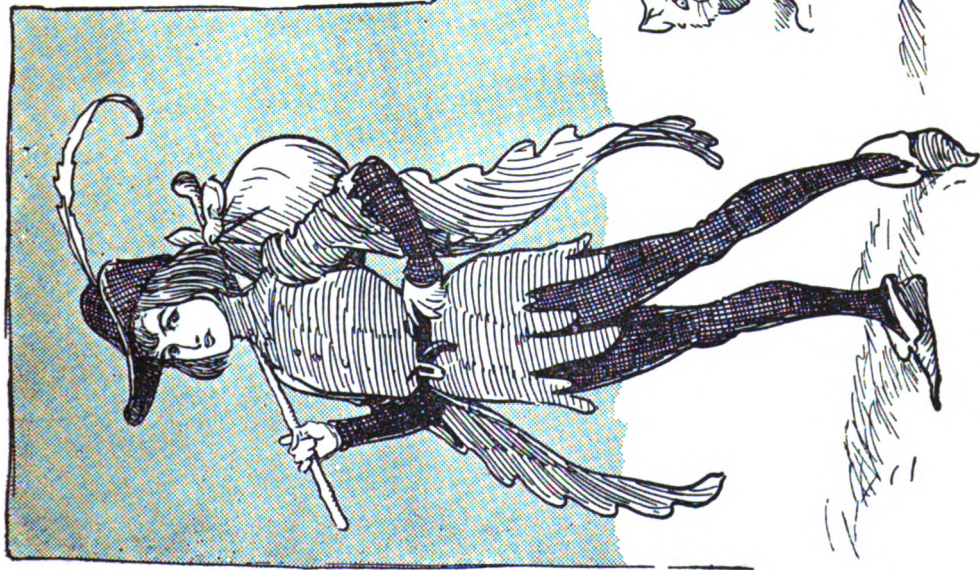
"Not unless somebody else volunteered. You don't imagine I do it of my own accord, for the

fun of it, do you?" cried Mr. Peel. "I can assure you I don't enjoy it a bit. But I am under a spell. Every night, when it strikes twelve, I am drawn against my will from my pedestal at the top of Cheapside, and something compels me to catch hold of the back of his chair and push him round until daybreak. If anyone would volunteer to do it for me, I might have an occasional night off—but nobody will. There's Charles I. at Charing Cross: he's fairly good-natured and **says** he would gladly oblige me, but **they've** made him on horse-back and he can't get off, and there's no way of harnessing his horse to the chair. And here's William IV.—he could do it, but he suffers from family pride, and that's worse than the measles for shutting a man off from his neighbours."

William IV., who had struck a dignified attitude within hearing, drew his stone mantle closer round him and strode coldly past them without speaking.

"I despise him for his pride," observed Mr. Peabody, looking after him, "but I envy him his legs. . . Hallo!" he peered suddenly round behind Mr. Peel. "I thought I heard them—the beasts! Push along, Peel! Here are those Nestle Cats coming again, and I don't want to have them fighting and tumbling and clawing all over

OLIVE SAW A HANDSOME YOUTH OF SEVENTEEN
OR SO, DRESSED IN CRIMSON DOUBLET AND
HOSE, WITH A FEATHER IN HIS CAP AND A
BUNDLE ON THE END OF A STICK SLUNG
ACROSS HIS SHOULDER ; AND ALMOST AT HIS
HEELS WERE TWO CATS.



Tom Browne

me as they were the night before last. Push along—do!”

“They ought to be sent to a Cats’ Home,” said Mr. Peel sourly, “and done away with.”

With that, he began to push the chair again at a rapidly increasing pace, and they were soon out of sight.

“I see them!” ejaculated Tony. “Here they come!”

Gazing in the same direction, Olive saw a handsome youth of seventeen or so, dressed in crimson doublet and hose, with a feather in his cap and a bundle on the end of a stick slung across his shoulder; and almost at his heels were two cats, one thin and mangy, and the other, who had been feeding on Nestle’s milk, sleek and fat and self-satisfied. No doubt you have noticed their pictures on the hoardings; both of them were walking a-tiptoe now, their backs arched and their tails swollen, and they were glaring at each other threateningly, and occasionally spitting and breaking into shrill and savage outcries.

“It’s Dick Whittington!” cried Tony. “Dick Whittington and—but I thought he only had one cat, Olive?”

“So he had,” she declared emphatically. “Those

are not his cats. They are the Nestle's Milk cats out of the poster."

"That's all they are," Becky agreed. "Dick's lost his, you see, and each of these here two cats wants him to adopt it instead, and he won't, so they follow him up and down everywhere, fighting and quarrelling about it disgracefully."

"And what does Dick Whittington do?"

"Keeps driving them away, but they keep coming back," said Becky.

Dick took off his cap as he approached and bowed to them very finely; he seemed to take to them both, at once, especially to Olive.

He explained about the cats, and what a bother they were to him; and all the while, the two animals were working themselves up into such a temper, and snarling and spitting and molrowing so noisily, that Olive and Tony could scarcely hear him speak; and, at length, he quite lost patience, made an angry rush, threw his stick at one cat and his bundle at the other, and sent them scampering up the street in a panic.

He chased them a little way; then came back and began to tell Olive the story of his life, all just as she remembered to have read it in the book, only better; then as they strolled apart from Tony

and Becky and were alone together, he said abruptly,

"I say, you are really the prettiest girl I ever met. Should we be sweethearts?"

Olive blushed, and felt embarrassed.

"Oh, we are not old enough," she objected shyly.

"Let's pretend that we are, though," said he, "then we can be real sweethearts by-and-by, when we are old enough. Shall we?"

What could she say? She liked him very much, already; he was so graceful and good-looking, and spoke so nicely, and was evidently anxious to be friends; so she said "Yes."

"Then I may kiss you, mayn't I?" he asked.

Olive blushed again, and felt shyer than ever, but it was silly to have a sweetheart if she didn't let him kiss her; so she let him.

"Now I shall go with you," he said gallantly, "and take care of you. You will not be afraid of anything whilst you have me to look after you, will you?"

Olive said no; and she meant it. But then she had not the least idea of the astonishing and unheard-of dangers that still lay ahead of her that night.

CHAPTER VII

OLIVE AND TONY TRY TO BEFRIEND BLUEBEARD

With such a fearless and pleasant protector Olive could have been altogether happy, if it had not been for Tony. While she was not noticing he had gone wandering again, and was nowhere to be seen.

Becky could not tell her where he was this time, or which way he had gone.

"I was just having a word with Mr. Peckwater," she said, "and when I turned round, Master Tony wasn't here. But don't you worrit, my pretty; we'll find him."

And at the very first corner they came to they ran into P.C.1½, who was striding along at a great pace, but pulled up at sight of them, and did not seem at all glad to see Dick Whittington.

"Now, pass along, please!" he ordered, with a curt wave of his hand. "Move on, there!"

Dick laughed, and nodded to him carelessly, as



"AH! HERE'S GOG AND MAGOG. THIS IS THE YOUNG LADY I WAS MENTIONING TO YOU, GENTLEMEN."

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if he was not afraid and did not mean to obey him; and Olive was relieved at that, for she did not wish him to go.

"See? What did I tell you, miss?" I $\frac{1}{2}$ took a coloured handkerchief out of his helmet, and mopped his face. "No use trying to do my duty with these statues and poster vagabonds and Dick Whittingtons about. You see how they defy me, and if I lock 'em up I only get into trouble, as I've explained to you. I hope you won't encourage 'em, miss . . . Eh? Your brother? Oh, he's all right. Coming on behind with Gog and Magog. He'd have been lost if he hadn't met us, but I told them about him and you belonging to the City, miss, and they're taking care of him."

Which eased Olive's mind, as you may guess, and left her free to think of other things.

"Did you catch poor Bill Stickers?" she asked.

"Not likely, miss. Never meant to. I haven't got anything against him yet, y'know, and all I can do is to frighten him into keeping hisself out of the way. You see, the police don't know anything about him, and that proves what a sly, artful, bad character he must be—Ah! Here's Gog and Magog. This is the young lady I was mentioning to you, gentlemen."

He had turned, and was introducing Olive to the two biggest men she had ever seen or imagined.

Great, burly, monstrous giants they were, with some sort of armour on instead of coats and waist-coats, nothing on their heads, and wearing boots that were like those fancy worsted ones a baby wears and that left half their legs bare. They each carried a short stick from which a spiked ball dangled on a chain, as if they had been playing at cup-and-ball and had brought their playthings out with them. They were so tall that Olive had to hold her head right back, as if she were staring into the sky, in order to see their faces, and if their expressions had not been gentle and mild she would have been terrified, they were so powerful and so big.

To shake hands with her they had to fold themselves almost double, and, their hands being much too large to clasp her small ones properly, each in turn, gravely and respectfully, presented a single finger to her, and when she grasped even that it was like shaking the trunk of an elephant.

Tony was such a little, little figure standing between them that she dreaded lest one of them, moving incautiously, should put a foot on him and crush him as if he had been a beetle; but they were too

careful to have such a dreadful accident as that.

"We belonged to the old City, missy," said Gog, who was the taller of the two, "before there had ever been any Lord Mayor at all."

"But ever since Lord Mayors were invented," added Magog, the broader and sturdier of the two, "we have been faithful henchmen to them and their families. So long as you and your brother are within the City's boundaries, miss, you are in our charge and may rely on our services."

Olive thanked them; and they bowed, and drew themselves up, and fell in behind her and the others like a pair of preposterous footmen.

They were walking back in this style towards King William's vacant pedestal, for Olive was curious to hear the end of what Bluebeard had begun to tell them, when all in a moment, with a blood-curdling howl and a shriek, there were the fat and thin Nestle's Cats making a rush at Dick Whittington from opposite sides of the road. He dodged from betwixt them just in time, so that they smashed into each other and rolled over at his feet, a spinning tangle of fur and fury and deafening yells.

Whipping the bundle off his stick, Dick struck at them angrily, for Olive was near him and the Cats were bumping and squalling so close to her

that he was afraid she might get scratched. In the middle of the uproar Gog leaned quietly down over Olive, nipped the Cats at the back of their necks and tossed them apart, and they spun round, startled, and scampered off madly, one in hot pursuit of the other.

"You've heard them Cats, I dessay, miss," suggested $1\frac{1}{2}$, "often of a night when you've been at home in bed, and said to yourself, 'Dear me, there's them Nestle Cats at it agen!' You wouldn't say anything worse than that, but I do."

Olive confessed that she had many a time been wakened by them, but had not suspected until now that it was only the poster Cats who were disturbing her.

"They're no worse than others I have to put up with," sighed $1\frac{1}{2}$. "There's that Dick Whittington chap," he lowered his voice so that Dick on the other side of her should not overhear, "he's no good. You take my advice, miss, and don't trust him. He's deceitful."

"Oh!" Olive protested. "I am sure he couldn't be."

"Ain't he? Ah!" $1\frac{1}{2}$ bridled sulkily. "He deceives you because you think he's young and nice-looking, but he ain't so young as he looks. Why,

he's three hundred years old, if he's a day!"

"Three hundred—! Oh, that's impossible!" cried Olive.

"Now, I'm more straightforward," $1\frac{1}{2}$ continued: "I look ever so much older than I am. I'm too honest. I have to be, because I'm a policeman. I'm quite young, really, but I've had a lot of trouble. Why, I'm ever so much younger than this Dick Whittington. You wouldn't think it to look at us, but he's old enough to be my great-great-grandfather four times removed. Don't you be deceived in him, miss."

Olive guessed from his manner that he was only jealous; he wanted her to like him best, that was all; and although she was indignant with him for talking unkindly of Dick, she was sorry for him too, because she didn't like him best; and she made up her mind to like him all the better for that reason.

They found Bluebeard standing solitary by the hoarding, mournfully watching the sleeping form of the beautiful Princess Pearl, the Tatcho Girl.

"It is still too soon to kiss her," remarked Olive. "You said one o'clock exactly, didn't you?"

Yes," he groaned, "and it isn't half past twelve yet. Half an hour is a terrible long time. I would

kiss her whilst I'm waiting, but it would be wasted ; and in a few minutes they will be here, and then I shan't be able to."

"Who will be here?"

"Why, I told you—the Griffin and the Oxo Bull," said Bluebeard tetchily.

"But you did not tell me what they come for."

"Because they can't keep away. It is part of the spell. They have to be here by a quarter to one at the latest—sometimes they're earlier—and they have to stay on guard till the clock strikes, on purpose to prevent me or anyone from kissing her."

"I see!" exclaimed Olive. "That is what you meant when you said you could never kiss her at the right time?"

"Of course it is. If it was the Bull alone, I'd risk being tossed and gored ; or if it was the Griffin all by himself I'd take my chance of being clawed to death, or baked and burnt, or chewed to nothing. But when it's the two together—it would be suicide for me to meddle with them."

He choked back a sob, and wiped his eyes on his knuckles.

"Couldn't you beg them to go away, just as a favour, and explain how unhappy they make you?"

Or are they too cruel and hard-hearted?"

"I won't go so far as to say that of them. No. But I fancy from the way they look at me that they don't like me. They have read those stories about me, I expect, and think I only want to make her alive so as I can cut her head off . . . Come to think of it, though," he added, after reflection, "I am nearly certain you could do it for me if you would try."

"Could I?" cried Olive eagerly. "How? Tell me, and I will try."

"They are wonderfully fond of children," he went on moodily. "Both of them are, and they like being petted more than anything. I have often thought if I could get a pretty girl like you, and a charming boy like you brother—I say, he would help you, wouldn't he?"

"Yes," Tony promptly answered for himself.

"Thank you, my young friend. I have often thought," Bluebeard resumed, "if I could get two like you to pet those animals and make a fuss of them, you could persuade them to do anything. For instance, you might beg them to take you a ride somewhere, and then not get back here until past one, and that would give me a chance of being happy ever after. I've never had a chance yet, and,

oh, I should so like to have one, so as to know what it feels like to be happy!"

Olive thought about it.

"We must not let them guess why we want them to go," she said.

"Certainly not. They would never go if you did," declared Bluebeard. "No! all you've got to do is to tell them—after you have fussed over them a bit and make them pleased with themselves and friendly—tell them you very particularly want to go at once to see—what could you want to see? Have you been to Trafalgar Square lately? No? Well, I am surprised! Haven't you read how Old Mother Hubbard has been turned into a Mermaid and lives there now in one of the fountains?"

It took their breath away to hear of this. They could merely shake their heads to hint that it was the first they had heard about it.

"You don't seem to hear much! Why, it was the sensation of last week with us. Nobody was talking of anything else," said Bluebeard. "Look here! When the Oxo Bull and the Griffin come, you two go and pat and stroke them—don't be afraid, they won't hurt you—call them as many pretty names as you can think of, flatter them, say how handsome they are, and when you have

got them round a little and made them sort of silly and weak-minded, they will do anything for you. Say you long to go to Trafalgar Square immediately to see Old Mother Hubbard, and are too tired to walk, and will they give you each a ride there. They'll do it, if you tell them they have plenty of time to get there and back before one."

"But would they have time?"

"They would if it wasn't so far," said Bluebeard darkly. "You do want to help me, don't you?"

"I should like to ever so much, if—"

"He ain't so bad as most of them, this one ain't, miss. He's never no trouble, and it gives me the fair hump to see how miserable he is," P.C.1½ put in affably. "If there is any little thing I can do for you, mister, say the word."

"You are extremely kind, sir," said Bluebeard humbly. "The young lady does not like to inform the animals that they can run to Trafalgar Square and back before one. Would you mind doing that for her? They are certain to ask the time, and perhaps you would be so kind as to assure them that it is not more than five-and-twenty past twelve?"

"To be sure I will."

"But," Olive demurred, "will it be true?"

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“It ought to be,” said $1\frac{1}{2}$ decisively, “and that’s better than if it was. You leave it to me. I can do it natural. Bless you, I’m used to it!”

“’Sh!” Bluebeard lifted a warning finger. “This is them!”

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONSPIRACY SUCCEEDS

They came with a whirr, and a rustle, and a windy rush that scattered Olive and Bluebeard and most of the others right and left, and sent even Gog and Magog staggering backwards from the hoarding. Then the two animals sat down on their haunches exactly in front of the Tatcho Girl.

The Griffin had arrived a few inches ahead of the Oxo Bull. He came half running and half flying, a skinny, scraggy, bony thing, part bird and part beast, all legs and arms and claws and leathery wings, with a curly, spiky tail, and eyes that glared like the lamps of a motor car. Every time he breathed, fire streamed out of his mouth and smoke out of his nostrils, as if he were alight inside and used his nose as a chimney. The Bull was a bulky, powerful, mighty-horned creature, but he appeared homely and well-behaved by comparison with the Griffin.

"Go on," whispered Bluebeard, nudging Olive encouragingly. "There is no time to waste."

"Can they speak?" enquired Olive.

"Decidedly. All animals can, only they won't as a rule, because they have heard that silence is golden."

Olive would rather have made friends with the Oxo Bull, but as Tony was too scared of the Griffin to go near it, she ran forward bravely and, with a little coaxing, led the Bull to him (if you look at one of the Bull's pictures on the hoarding you will see her doing it; which proves that what I am telling you is all true); then she went and attended to the Griffin herself.

"Good evening," she began timidly. "Do you know the nearest way to Trafalgar Square?"

"Yes, my dear," said the Griffin, speaking in a rich and excellent bass; "it is a goodish distance, though. It will take you half an hour or more to walk there."

"Oh, dear me!" Olive stepped nearer and patted him with growing confidence. "I am too tired to walk so far as that."

"Well, you're too late for the tuppenny tube I'm afraid," he said, "and you can't take a 'bus because the last one has gone."



SHE RAN FORWARD BRAVELY AND, WITH A LITTLE COAXING, LED THE BULL TO HIM.

"I wonder whether you could—if you would be so nice and kind as to give me a ride up there?" she said wheedlingly, leaning her head against his scaly, hard body and kissing the edge of one of his leathery wings.

"Can't," he returned gruffly. "No time. Not till after one."

"That would be too late. I can't wait so long as that," Olive regretted. "Couldn't you take me now?"

"No," he said decisively. "I am on duty here till after one."

"What a pity. I like you very much, you know. You look so good and kind." The Griffin cleared his throat and tried not to seem pleased with himself. "I made so sure you would give me a ride there. Need you stay here all the while till it strikes one?"

"I don't say that. But I am bound to be on the spot when one o'clock strikes."

"And isn't there time to take me and get back before then?"

"Think so? I don't know. There might be. We came straight here to-night and are earlier than usual, I fancy, but I doubt if there is quite time for me to—What is the time!"

H

"The time?" P.C.1½ appeared to rouse himself and lend an ear to the conversation for the first time. "It's early yet." He pulled out his watch and examined it by the light of his lantern. "Five-and-twenty minutes past twelve."

"No later?" cried the Oxo Bull, who was already on the best possible terms with Tony and was holding his head down to have it stroked. "We could take them to the Square, Griffin—they want to see Old Mother Hubbard—we could take them there and be back in twenty minutes, if we went quick."

"So we could," agreed the Griffin.

"Oh, do take us then!" cried Olive and Tony together.

"What do you say, Oxo?" The Griffin was flattered by Olive's admiration, and was more than willing to oblige her if he could do it safely.

"What do you say?" asked the Oxo Bull, no less flattered and soothed by Tony's attentions.

They put their heads together, and discussed the point in hasty, growly undertones.

"Very well," said the Griffin aloud; "there is just time if we start now, this minute."

"Not a second to lose, though," added the Bull. They began to bustle and puff impatiently.

"Help the young lady on to my back," cried the Griffin.

"And up you get on mine, young master," said the Bull.

Dick Whittington bent gracefully on one knee, held his hand for Olive to place her foot in it, and so lifted her on to the Griffin's back as lightly and as daintily as any lady ever mounted a horse. In the same moment $1\frac{1}{2}$ and Bluebeard picked Tony up between them and sat him on the Bull.

"Ready?" cried the Griffin.

Olive said "Yes."

"Ready?" cried the Oxo Bull.

Tony said "Yes."

"Hold tight, then!" cried the Griffin and the Bull together.

And then, with a bellow and a roar, a flapping of strong wings and a breathing of fire and smoke, they were off.

CHAPTER IX

IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE

They swept at a terrific pace along Cannon Street and Queen Victoria Street, and so round by New Bridge Street into Fleet Street; and all the way they went the Griffin puffed and panted fire and smoke and lit the road with the glare of his lamp-like eyes. Sometimes he seemed to be flying low, like a swallow, and the flapping of his wings and the speed at which he was going made such a wind that Olive's hair streamed out straight behind her, and every now and then she had to turn her head aside and gasp for breath. Yet the Oxo Bull had no difficulty in keeping close to their heels, with his tail on end and his head flung up and Tony clinging to his horns.

What surprised Olive even more than this was that P.C.1 $\frac{1}{2}$ and Dick Whittington easily kept pace with them also, one running on each side of her, Dick with his bundle on his shoulder and the



"ISN'T IT JOLLY!" TONY LAUGHED DELIGHTEDLY.

Tom Browne

two Nestle Cats straining desperately to overtake him, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ with his elbows squared and his legs and arms going like the pistons of a railway engine. Not far behind them, too, came Gog and Magog; but, then, they had such long legs and took such giant strides that it was no wonder they were able to travel so fast.

"Isn't it jolly!" Tony laughed delightedly.

Olive thought so, but could not say it, because of the wind that was taking her breath away.

When they arrived at the pedestal opposite the Law Courts, where the Griffin lives in the daytime, Gog and Magog pulled up and shouted good-bye, for that was the City boundary and they were not permitted to go beyond it.

But the Griffin pelted on, with the Oxo Bull hard in its track, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ and Dick Whittington racing alongside, and never slackened speed till they dashed out at the end of the Strand into Trafalgar Square.

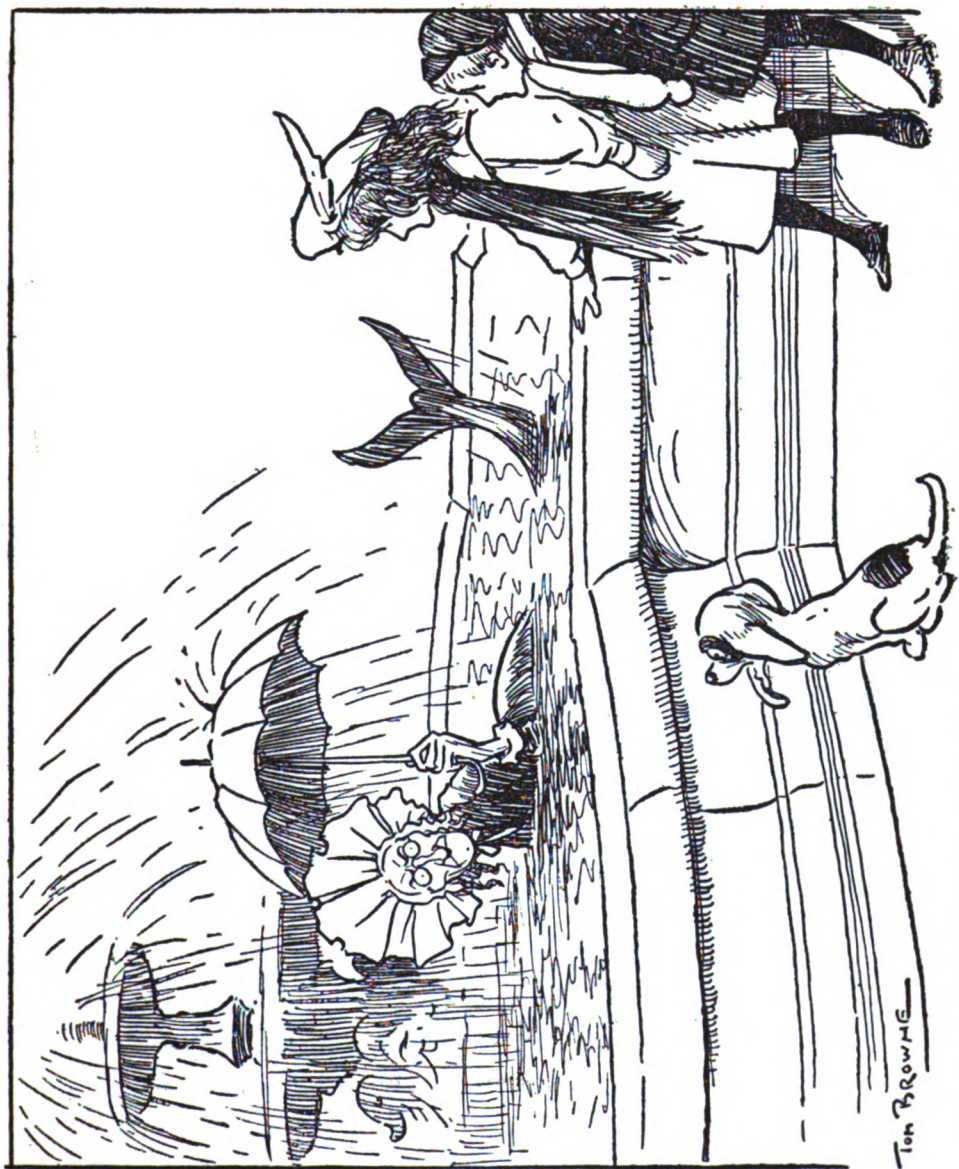
"Help them off!" panted the Griffin, before he was well at a standstill. "Look sharp!"

Dick Whittington and $1\frac{1}{2}$ caught at Olive simultaneously and lifted her to the ground, whilst Tony slid down unassisted, and before either of them could utter a word of thanks the Bull and

the Griffin were scurrying back into the Strand.

Leaving $1\frac{1}{2}$ and Dick Whittington to sit and recover from the exhausting effects of their long run, Olive and Tony had leisure to look about them at the two fountains, the pedestals from which the statues had gone, and the towering Nelson Column; and the first moving object that attracted them was the forlorn figure of Old Mother Hubbard. She was floating in one of the fountains with her umbrella up to keep the spray from wetting her bonnet, and on a nearer view they saw with great concern that what Bluebeard had said was true: she had a long, thick tail instead of legs, and would have been exactly like an ordinary mermaid only she was old, and not pretty, and still wore the ridiculous big bonnet that belongs to her in all her pictures.

Her dog watched her from the pavement, lolling his tongue out and evidently in deep distress about her. When she flopped awkwardly and splashed the water he circled round and round the fountain, whining and barking; once or twice, whilst they were there, he sprang into it and grabbed her, as if he believed she was drowning, and rolled her into all manner of uncomfortable positions, trying to drag her out, and would not let her alone till she beat him off with her umbrella.



Tom Browne

"MY ONLY COMFORT IS THAT I CAN'T CATCH RHEUMATICS IN MY LEGS, ANYHOW, BECAUSE I HAVEN'T GOT ANY."

"Drat the critter!" exclaimed Mother Hubbard. "Haven't I got enough to put up with, without being mauled and worried by my own dog and all the little clothes I've got left almost tore off my body!"

"Don't you want him to get you out?" asked Olive. "You will catch cold if you stay there, won't you?"

"I know I shall!" snapped Mother Hubbard. "Me to be playing in a fountain, like a blessed nymf', at my time o' life—it's a sin and a shame, I call it!"

"Why don't you come out, then?" urged Olive.

"Do you suppose I shouldn't if I could? I can't! And even if I could, how am I going to to walk with no feet—nothing but this shocking fish-tail that grewed on all of a sudden unbeknown to me? My only comfort is that I can't catch rheumatics in my legs anyhow, because I haven't got any."

"Who put the spell on you?" enquired Olive.

"Titania, the Fairy Queen, I fancy. I don't know for certain, but she's the one I suspect. All I know for a fact is that when I woke one night—for us folk don't waste the lovely starry nights in bed as you do; we sleep in the daytime—I

found myself in this fountain and nothing to put my boots on, even if I'd known where they were, and the poor dog mad about it, and here I have had to be every night ever since."

"And you do not know why?"

"Doesn't so much matter why. It wouldn't be any easier for me if I did know; except that I can't get the spell off until I find out why it is on, can I?"

She said something further, but Olive did not catch what it was, for at this point a clock struck one, and whilst the sound was still echoing she was startled by an excited shout high in the air, and gazing up bewildered, saw the statue of Nelson swarming down his column and looking, as he descended, like a full-sized monkey on an uncommonly large stick.

He was not allowed to come down till after one o'clock because it was part of his duty to keep watch, from his lofty position, and see that nobody kissed the Tatcho Girl and woke her. Olive was not told of this at the moment, but she pretty well guessed it when he sprang from the base of his column, snatched a small book from his pocket and opening it on the back of one of the stone lions, began writing hurriedly, reading aloud as he

wrote: "1.a.m. precisely. Latitude E.C. Longitude 1907"; and then as if he had not patience to continue, he thrust the book into his pocket and shouted to Olive,

"She's gone! I have just seen Sunny Jim kiss Tatcho, the Sleeping Beauty, and she is off the hoarding!"

"Oh, I am so glad!" exclaimed Olive.

"You ought not to be," said Nelson sternly. "England expects every man to do his duty, and if the Griffin and the Oxo Bull had done theirs this would never have happened."

"But they are only animals," Olive reminded him.

"All the more reason why they should be obedient and do what was expected of them," declared Nelson. "However, I can't stop talking. I must report this at headquarters immediately."

He started to run, and disappeared at full speed into Whitehall.

"Still, I can't help feeling glad poor Bluebeard has managed to kiss her at last," sighed Olive. "Though I do hope the Oxo Bull and the Griffin will not get into trouble, don't you, Tony?"

There was no answer. She looked round in sudden alarm and could see nothing of him; for the third

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time that night whilst her attention had been drawn from him for a minute, Tony had strangely disappeared.

CHAPTER X

HOW TONY WAS LOST AND THE STRAND WAS CLEARED TO FIND HIM

"Tony!" she called. "Tony!"

Her voice rang lonely in the empty air, and he did not answer.

P.C.1 $\frac{1}{2}$ and Dick Whittington heard her; they had been stopping a fight between the Nestle Cats, but directly Olive called they came running to see what was the matter.

"Don't you get frightened, miss; we'll find him," said 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ soothingly. "We will—but wait a second—where's that Vacuum Cleaner fellow? Let's try what he can do, first. There he is! Hi! Vacuum! Here!"

He shouted again, and beckoned, and beckoned, till a stolid man in a loose white suit came from the direction of St. Martin's Lane pulling a heavy red machine after him; there was a lot of piping wound round it, and at the end of the piping was

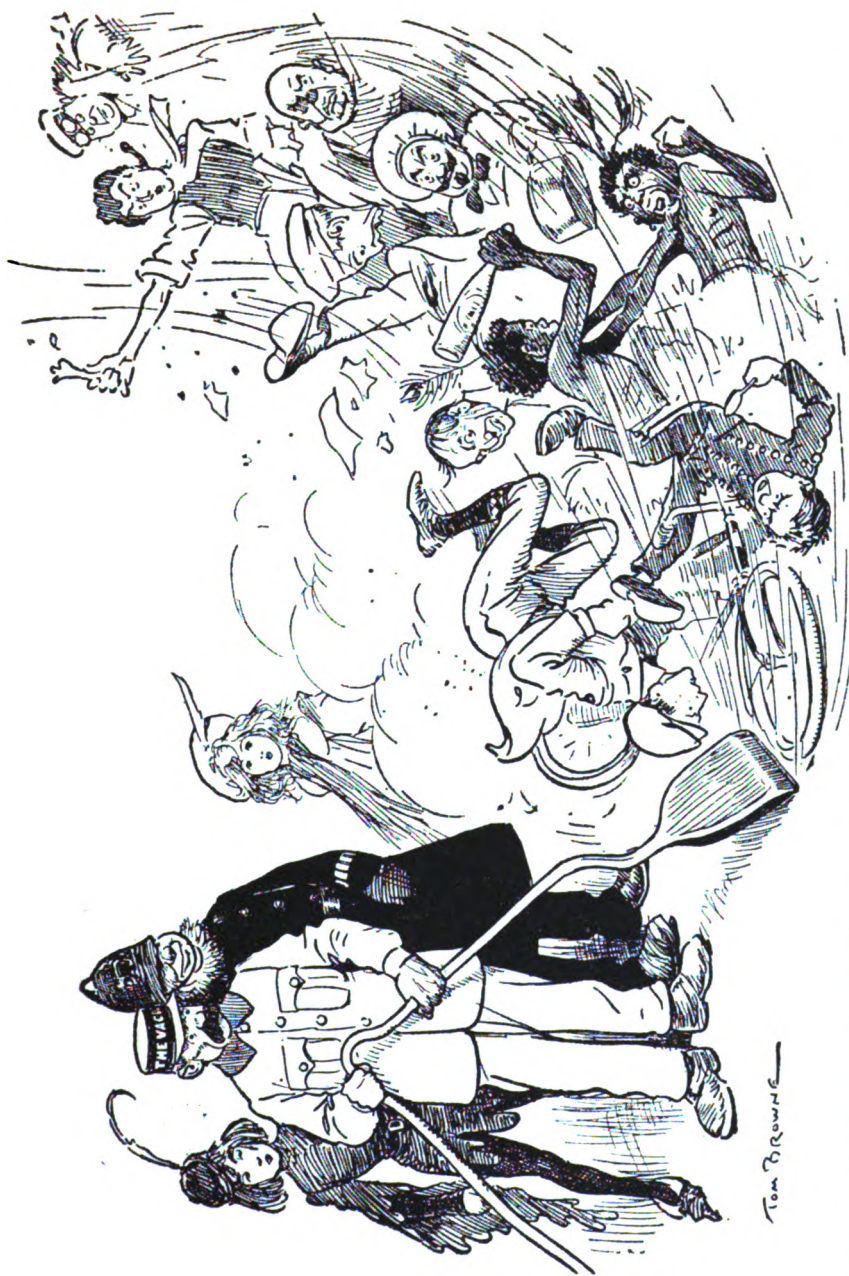
a big brass nozzle which he carried in his hand.

1½ and Dick Whittington ran to meet him. They gave him his orders, then pushed behind the machine, and as soon as it was in position at the top of the Strand, they set the works inside going, and it began to pump and wheeze and puff and make a curious hissing noise—a sort of noise as if it were some enormous live animal and were all the while drawing in a long, deep breath.

“Ready?” demanded 1½. “Go ahead, then, Vacuum, and clean the Strand. It’s all done,” he added, aside to Olive, “by the power of suction.”

So the sturdy man in white put the brass nozzle on the ground and held it there till, the drawing in sound getting louder and stronger every minute, it began to suck up everything in the street and draw it towards itself with such wonderful force that it had to come, whether it wanted to or not.

First it was the Rudge-Whitworth young man on his bicycle: he swept furiously through the Strand as if a terrific wind was blowing behind him—he had put on his brake and was holding his pedals still and clinging to the handle-bars with his eyes shut, on account of the speed he was making, and then, all in a twinkling, there he was flung on the ground and spinning and kicking and bumping and



SPINNING AND KICKING AND BUMPING AND TWIRLING AND TWISTING OVER AND OVER AT THE MOUTH OF THE BIG BRASS NOZZLE.

twirling and twisting over and over and over at the mouth of the big brass nozzle. He was too large to be drawn inside it, and so kept on banging against it and spinning and whirling at the end of it. And closely and swiftly one after the other, other figures came bowling along and were dashed against him helplessly and lay there rolling round and round against the nozzle with him.

There was the Bird's Custard Powder page boy; he had been eating the custard on the sly as usual, and was clinging on to the cup now and splashing the rich, yellow custard all over the cyclist as the two of them sprawled and turned rapidly together; there were the two Stower's Lime Juice Savages: they whirled up clutching one another's throat and each trying to club the other with his bottle. Then came the clean-shaven Beecham's Pill gentleman: he had been caught up in the mighty draught, and in spite of all he could do was turning wild somersaults in his frock coat and fancy waistcoat; and right on his heels fluttered the Lazenby Cook and the Bird's Custard Powder Cook like a pair of impossible butterflies: now they were upside down, and now they were right side up, but all the time they were revolving in the breeze, arguing hotly, and dodging and doing their best to hit each

other. Both of them being Cooks, naturally they never can agree when they are off the hoardings, because too many cooks spoil the broth, and each suspects that the other is the one too many.

Next after them, hurrying and scurrying against his will, came Tom Smith's Father Christmas with his arms full of Crackers and his ruddy face tangled and lost in his long, white whiskers; then there was the Pear's Soap Barber, flourishing his razor dangerously, and the Customer he had been shaving tied up in a cloth and all white with rage and lather, and foaming at the mouth. There was the broken-down Allsopp Motor-Car, too, and the party of men it belongs to: one minute they were like a bulgy, bursting cloud flying just above the ground, and the next they had swooped down like a thunderbolt and were all banging and bumping and bobbing in and out of the struggling mass of people that boiled and billowed frantically at the end of the Vacuum Cleaner nozzle.

There were all these, and I don't know how many more, but Tony was not amongst them; and just as 1½ was ordering the Vacuum Cleaner man to leave off working, for he reckoned there was nothing left in the Strand by now except the houses, there was a strangled, exasperated roar and, tying himself in

furious knots and untying himself all the way he came, the prickly Sanitas Dragon was hustled up and plumped down and twirled and tumbled round and round with the others. He was so irritated that whilst he was turning he casually gobbled up the Lazenby Cook and the Bird's Custard page boy, and the Pears' Soap Barber with his razor, just as you might swallow a few little bulls' eyes; then he quite lost his temper, and with a tremendous leap flew on to the Vacuum Cleaner man, ate him at one gulp with the brass nozzle and most of the piping, and then sat quietly down against the opening to the Tube railway station breathing very pantingly and with his tongue hanging out, as if he felt full and comfortable and did not want to be disturbed.

Of course, the Vacuum Cleaner stopped working at once, and all the people sorted themselves and stood up and began to find fault with each other because they had been kicked and bruised so much. All except the Beecham's Pill gentleman: he merely pulled his tie straight, brought a number of neat small boxes from his coat-tail pocket, and said that all of them who felt ill, or as if they were going to be ill, ought to buy some of his pills, which were really worth a guinea a box, but he was prepared to sell them for less sooner than see any man die for

the want of them. Father Christmas bought a box; so did the Bird's Custard Powder Cook; and the Allsopps' Motor-Car men had a box apiece, in case they could not find the other refreshments they believed they had brought in the car with them.

But the Pears' Soap Customer said he required nothing but his Barber; let him wipe the lather out of his eyes, he said, and see where the Barber was, in order that he might kick him hard with both feet. When they told him that the Barber was inside the Sanitas Dragon he burst into tears and cried out that the Barber was a sneak and a coward; he spoke as if the Barber had gone inside on purpose to get out of his way, and he looked at the Dragon's large smile, with the smoke and fire coming out of it, as if he fancied it might be rather nice and warm inside on such a cold night, and was half a mind to go in himself. He dried his eyes and even went so far as to nod and smile at the Dragon in a friendly manner, but the Dragon merely nodded back indifferently and didn't invite him in, so he walked off with an offended air, wiping the lather from his face with his hands and scattering it all about him like a snowstorm as he went.

"Oh, but that Vacuum Cleaner man! How

terrible it is!" cried Olive, forgetting Tony, in the unspeakable horror of the moment. "Can nothing be done for him?"

"He's had too much done for him already," said $1\frac{1}{2}$ unfeelingly.

"It is too late, I expect, to save him now," sobbed Olive.

"Why, miss, in a manner of speaking, it's too early," replied $1\frac{1}{2}$. "Don't you be upset at all. The Dragon won't be a real Dragon after daybreak, you see—he'll be a flat picture with no inside worth talkin' about, back on his hoarding, and the Vacuum Cleaner man will be back on his as good as if nothing fatal had ever happened to him; and they'll both be alive and ready to begin fresh again to-morrow night. Meanwhile, it's a bit of a treat for that there poor Dragon. He don't get anything inside him all day, except the sword of St. Michael, like you'll see him on his poster, and I reckon that only gives him a pain there and don't do him any benefit."

"I have noticed they leave a sort of outline of their figures in the poster, they tear themselves out of," remarked Olive thoughtfully; "but if somebody tore off the rest of it whilst they were not on it—how could they get back then?"

"They couldn't, miss," said $1\frac{1}{2}$. "They'd be homeless, as it might be, and could not change back into pictures any more, but would have to wander about and pretend to be real people as long as they lasted. That happens sometimes; that's how it is you occasionally see such funny men and women still loitering in the streets by broad daylight."

"Yes, but there is Tony—we must look for Tony," Olive interrupted him. "Should I run and—"

But $1\frac{1}{2}$ respectfully checked her.

"No, no, miss," he said; "you stay here. We will find him. It is our duty to do that. . . . Here, you—Whittington—don't stand there doing nothing! You go that way, and I'll go this, and we're bound to come across him. Now, stir yourself. Look sharp!"

CHAPTER XI

OF THE CHARM THAT GOG AND MAGOG GAVE TO OLIVE

They were scarcely gone from the Square when the only picture that remained on a hoarding in front of a Charing Cross shop yawned, stretched its arms and stepped leisurely down into the street. It was the fine, stout Lord Mayor's Coachman, a sleek, well-fed man, in knee breeches and a cocked hat, who helps to advertise the Globe Metal Polish.

"They have both gone the wrong way," he observed sleepily to Olive. "They have gone after that boy who was here with you, miss, haven't they?"

"Yes," said Olive. "Did you see which way he went?"

"He went right in the opposite direction. I saw him ramble off up Pall Mall about ten minutes ago."

"Oh, you should have said so when you saw Dick Whittington and the policeman starting on the wrong roads," she reproached him.

"I was too tired, miss. You see, I could get up

at twelve like the rest of them, if I chose, but there's such a vulgar crowd about nowadays that I prefer to stay select on my poster and have an extra nap. It was Mother Hubbard chattering to you that first disturbed me. Then I dozed off again and when Nelson came shouting down his column that woke me and I did just notice the boy going away into Pall Mall, but all the row and the mess made by that Vacuum Cleaner chap put it out of my head, miss." He yawned and stretched himself again. "Still, I should not worry, if I was you. Your friends are sure to find him. They've both gone the wrong way, but as your brother doesn't know his way about, it isn't likely that he'll go the right one, is it? And if they all go the wrong way, why, they can hardly help meeting each other, can they?"

Which sounded so reasonable that Olive was comforted, and felt able to enter into conversation with the Lord Mayor's Coachman whilst she waited.

She chatted to him of her great-grandfather, Sir Christopher, the Lord Mayor, and his bearing altered immediately. He touched his hat, and apologised for living outside the City.

"I ought to be within the boundaries, miss," he acknowledged sadly, "but if they paste me up out

here, I am powerless. It is all the fault of Bill Stickers, and I understand it is one of the things for which he is to be prosecuted."

"Oh, but he told me he had not done anything," said Olive, "and I½ said that he hadn't done anything either."

"That's their ignorance, miss," yawned the Lord Mayor's Coachman. "If they say he hasn't done anything, it only proves that they don't know anything. And yet," he added scornfully, "they talk of police intelligence."

He presently went on to chat very interestingly and obligingly of the changes that had come over London since he had been in the plate-polishing business as an advertisement on the hoardings.

"There's too much traffic now, and the noise in the streets is more deafening than it used to be," he complained. "I don't like the smell of the motor-buses and motor-cars—they travel too fast and they smell too plain. As for cats—I call them the curse of London, miss. Perhaps that's because I suffer from them more than most people do, in consequence of my calves. But they are a general nuisance, really."

"Do you mean that they scratch you?" asked Olive.

"They scratch everybody," he said. "You see those Lions at the base of the Nelson Column? They don't come off at nights now, like they used to, all on account of there being so many cats. They're growing old and they're not strong, and the cats are always arching their backs at them and trying to make them fight, and when they won't, they fly at 'em and scratch and tear and bite them unfortunate wild beasts something cruel. If you look, you'll see the marks of the scratches all over them. That's why they won't come off their pedestals. They feel safer on them, and they're hoping soon to get recommended into the Zoological Gardens where they'll be properly protected and taken care of in their old age. Reg'lar meals and a comfortable cage is all they ask for, and then they'd be as happy and cosy as any old folks in an almshouse. Life out in the London streets is too dangerous for them; they told me so . . . Hallo!" he paused astonished. "If here isn't Gog and Magog coming! What on earth are they doing outside the City? They'll get into an awful row for this! My word! I wouldn't be in their shoes!"

Olive turned to look, and there, sure enough, were Gog and Magog coming towards her from the Strand.



"YOU KNOW ME?" WHISPERED THE WITCH EXULTANTLY. "IT IS I WHO HAVE BEEN LEADING TONY ASTRAY."

She ran across the Square to meet them, but as she was passing the pedestal that is during the day occupied by Charles I. on horseback, a scraggy, wizened, bent old crone, carrying a besom and wearing a black cloak and a steeple-hat, stepped from behind it and clutched her by the sleeve.

At the first glance, Olive took her for Mother Shipton, but as the witch stooped and brought her face closer she was shocked and terrified to recognise that it was Aunt Prue. The hard, clear, cold eyes were her Aunt's; so was the face, though across and across its proud beauty was drawn a strange mesh of wrinkles; and so was the voice.

"You know me?" whispered the witch exultantly. "It is I who have been leading Tony astray all the while, though I have kept myself invisible until now. I hate him! I hate you! And I have lured him far enough at last, and you shall never find him again, never!"

She laughed softly, but shrilly, a laugh that cut Olive like a knife and chilled her; but it ceased abruptly as Gog and Magog approached, quickening their steps, and she added maliciously:

"They cannot track him. Nobody can. I have smoothed his footprints out of the snow, and led him

to where you will never dream of finding him. He is lost, lost, lost!"

She flashed a look of spiteful fury on the two giants, shook a skinny fist in their faces, shrieked gloatingly, and leaping astride her besom, whisked up into the air on it and flew away till she was so high she seemed no more than an ordinary bird.

"Oh, dear!" cried Olive tearfully. "Tony is lost!"

"It is very unfortunate." Magog shook his head gravely.

"Very!" echoed Gog. "But we warned him, and so did you, mistress, and he would go wandering from you disobediently, and disobedience is always punished one way or another."

"Mother Shipton says he will never be found any more," said Olive anxiously, "and I know Aunt Prue was not fond of him, and only last night—or to-night was it?—she struck him; and a little while ago I dreamt that she took him away and killed him. Oh, can't he ever be found again?"

"That depends," returned Magog kindly. "We knew by instinct that he was lost. Besides, we met $1\frac{1}{2}$, and he told us so; and we came out on purpose to help you and to do our best for him."

"Yes, we are being disobedient now. We have come beyond the City boundary and shall certainly suffer for it," said Gog gloomily. "We do not know what will happen to us, but it will be something dreadfully unpleasant, and it will happen before we can get back into the City again—that is all we can be sure of."

"Don't mind what he says." Magog smiled on Olive genially, and yet a little sadly. "It is only his way. Why, he was the first to say we must come out to you and risk the consequences."

"Can you find Tony, then?" begged Olive. "Do you know where he is?"

"It will take time to undo what Mother Shipton has done," replied Magog. "But do not be afraid; we can give you the means of finding him in the end. We can give you the chance to find him, and whether you do so depends entirely on whether you use that chance wisely and well. You shall have a potent charm that will enable you to discover your brother at any rate before you get back home in the morning, so long as you do not lose it. If you lose it, or allow anyone to steal it from you, you can have no second chance and really never will find Tony any more."

He spoke with impressive earnestness, struggling

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the while with something in the waist-pocket of the chain-armour that fitted him too tightly, for he was more than plump; he went on struggling with it silently, and brought it out, at last, with a jerk.

It was a large snuff-box; and the singular thing was that its shape and pattern resembled in every detail the shape and pattern of the heavy, old-fashioned oak chest that stood in the nursery at home: there was the same filagree work carved over the top and sides, and the City arms—the two griffins, the shield and the helmet—gilded on the front of it.

“Take this, and keep it carefully. If necessary, you may place it in the charge of somebody you can trust, but be very sure that you *can* trust him, for this reason,” Magog warned her solemnly: “whoever has possession of the snuff-box can perform one miracle with it, and one only. Directly its work is done, it returns to me, and I am not permitted to lend it to the same person twice. There are many of these night-people who would be thankful to get hold of it and turn themselves into day-people, or break the spells they are under now; and they will know that you have this, and will try their hardest to steal it or wheedle it from you, but if you let them, your brother is lost for good. Remember



"TAKE THIS, AND KEEP IT CAREFULLY," MAGOG WARNED HER SOLEMNLY.

that! If at any time you must trust anyone to take care of it for you, make sure it is not anyone who will use it for his own benefit. One more caution. Do not on any account open the lid. If you do the snuff will fly up into your face and you will never be able to leave off sneezing—you will sneeze, and sneeze, and sneeze until you have sneezed yourself all to pieces."

Olive took the box in both hands, and thanked him and Gog fervently.

"It is so very, very kind of you," she said; "but I cannot bear to think that you must be punished for what you are doing for me. I could never forgive myself if anything bad happened to you."

"Something is bound to happen to us," declared Gog. "We don't know what it is, but it's bound to happen. Bound to!"

"But—but," faltered Olive, "couldn't it be stopped? Can't I do something—anything to—to save you from it?"

Magog shook his head.

"We are glad to serve you," he said bravely, "and are prepared to die happy."

"Oh, but you must not die!" cried Olive, deeply distressed. "I don't want you to die!"

"We don't want to die," Gog admitted. "People will miss us from our place in the Guildhall, the City won't seem the same without us. But, no; I don't think there is anything you can do to preserve us from punishment. Still, if you would really like to try, you might, perhaps, go to the British Museum and ask the Sphinx there whether you can rescue us from whatever doom is to fall upon us. There is a way to do everything, of course; and no doubt the Sphinx could tell you how it can be done, if she chooses. Whatever you do, though, wherever you go, and whatever else you leave undone—take care of the snuff-box."

He raised a warning hand; then, whilst Olive was tearfully trying to thank them again, they linked arms and, as if drawn by some unseen power that they could no longer resist, walked dreamily, mechanically back towards the City.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE SHOCKING FATE OF GOG AND MAGOG, AND HOW THE PEOPLE OF THE NIGHT TRIED TO GET THE SNUFF-BOX

Olive stood hesitating, and her eyes so filled with tears of pity that the receding figures of the two giants, of Mother Hubbard in the fountain, of the Sanitas Dragon sitting drowsily by the Tube station, of the Globe Metal Polish Coachman languidly warming his hands at the fire that flared pleasantly from the Dragon's open mouth—everything in the Square, in fact, became blurred, and by the time she could dry her eyes and was able to see clearly again P.C. 1½ and Dick Whittington had returned, very despondent, and were asking her why she was crying.

"I have heard about that magic snuff-box before," cried 1½, when she had explained what had taken place in their absence. "It is quite true, Miss, what they told you about it; but Gog and Magog, if

all I have heard in the City is to be believed—”

He pulled a long face, and shook his head and, having exchanged glances, he and Dick Whittington stood staring gloomily, both in the same direction.

Following their gaze, Olive saw they were watching the great figures of the giants, and she watched also, oddly fascinated, and dreading every moment to see something impossibly terrible happen to them. She noticed that the two figures moved more and more slowly, as if life and energy were so draining out of them that they would presently stop altogether, as a clock does when the wheels run down; then, all of a sudden, a violent shudder shook each of them, they roared hoarsely as if in pain, and began to shrink, and shrink, and so shrank visibly and swiftly until they were little more than a couple of feet high; there was a blinding flash, a bang, and a cloud of thick smoke; and when this cleared away nothing was to be seen of either of them.

I can't tell you how horrified and heartbroken Olive was; nobody could; but you can guess how you would have felt yourself, especially if you knew as she did, that it was all through you and a wilful brother of yours that such a fearful fate had overtaken them.

It was some time before she was calm enough to think or speak of anything else; and in the interval, whilst $1\frac{1}{2}$ and Dick Whittington were saying things to cheer her, she became dimly aware that Mr. Peel had come into the Square wheeling Mr. Peabody, and not far behind them walked Bluebeard and Becky: she hot and talkative and indignant; he very moody and silent.

Olive was no sooner sufficiently recovered to notice them than she beheld Mother Shipton, who had reappeared, trailing her besom in the snow, and was leaning over Mr. Peabody's chair in earnest conversation. Next she spoke to Mr. Peel; then to Becky, and to Bluebeard, pointing Olive out to each of them, till she felt quite uncomfortable at having so much attention directed to her.

From Bluebeard, Mother Shipton, with her besom scratching a groove in the snow and her black cloak puffed out by the air she raised in going, flitted to the fountain and said something to Old Mother Hubbard, who nodded eagerly and seemed excited by what she had heard; thence, with a sly, sidelong swoop, she passed in turn to the Globe Metal Polish Coachman, to Dick Whittington, and to P.C. $1\frac{1}{2}$, whispering cunningly to each, and still pointing a bony finger at Olive; and, at length, she thrust

her face abruptly into Olive's and shrieking with laughter startled her again with the weird and wicked likeness she had to Aunt Prue.

The next moment she was a whirling blur in the air, flying away on her besom nobody knew whither.

"What's that you've got there?" Bluebeard asked sulkily.

"This?" Olive had been almost forgetting the snuff-box; she looked at it now in her hand and explained what it was.

"Let me see it," said Bluebeard.

She was unsuspectingly passing it to him, but remembered in time and drew back.

"Oh, but I must not part with it," she said.

"I'll give it you back," he protested fretfully.

Olive eyed him with some uncertainty.

"I must not," she repeated. "If I did I might never find Tony, and you would not like me to lose him for ever and ever, would you?"

"You mean you can't trust me with it, I suppose!" sneered Bluebeard. "I don't expect it's worth more than a few shillings. When I had my beard on and a real castle of my own, I had several snuff-boxes that were jewelled all round the lid and worth fifty times as much as that one." Then he

paused, and with a sudden change of manner and a little shamefacedly, he added, "You are quite right not to trust me, though. I can't trust myself. If you lent it to me I should be tempted to make myself happy and not care about you. You keep it. We are most of us selfish like that, and it's safest not to trust anyone with anything you want back again."

"But you are happy now, surely?" Olive questioned him, surprised.

"What for?"

"Why the gentleman on top of the pillar came down on purpose to say he had seen you kiss the Tatcho lady and she had come off the hoarding."

"So she did. Yes. And after I have waited all these years and taken all that trouble she says she doesn't like me, and won't have anything to do with me. She says she can't bear bald-headed men since she has been in the Hair Restoring business." He took out his handkerchief and wept into it bitterly. "And she has gone off with that rascal Peckwater. I've got no money, you see, and he's got nothing but money; that's how it is. I wish I'd been born a Quaker, then I should have been rich."

"Oh, I didn't think she was like that," sighed Olive, "she is so pretty."

"The pretty ones are generally like that," groaned Bluebeard. "I wish she had been ugly."

"Then perhaps you would not have loved her," suggested Olive.

"No, and then I shouldn't have been chased about, as I am now, by that Oxo Bull and the Griffin. They are so annoyed that I expect I shall be tossed and gored and eaten alive every night all the rest of my life. I almost wish they would peel me off the hoarding and let me die. It is rough on the Oxo Bull and the Griffin, I admit. They have been punished, you know."

"What has happened to them, poor things?" faltered Olive.

"Why, the Griffin has been turned into the Oxo Bull and the Oxo Bull has been turned into the Griffin, and they'll never be themselves any more. You look at the Griffin on his pedestal opposite the Law Courts next time you pass by daylight, and you'll notice the two small bumps on his head—that's where his horns used to be when he was the Oxo Bull," said Bluebeard. "Otherwise you can't see anything wrong with either of them; each of them looks so exactly like the other one that nobody would believe there was anything the matter—that's what aggravates them."

"But what about me? Mr. Peckwater is engaged to me," Becky struck in wrathfully. "We were to have been married next week, and all through this snivelling Bluebeard, or Sunny Jim, or whatever he calls himself, kissing that Tatcho hussy so that she could get off the hoarding and make mischief, I'm jilted. I don't pity him a bit. Serves him right for interfering with the laws of magic. Why can't he leave other people's spells alone? I've no patience with these spelling reformers!"

"I loved her," wailed Bluebeard, "and I hoped she was fond of me."

"Bah! She isn't old enough to know her own mind. If you had any sense you'd marry a steady, sensible woman of my age." Bluebeard gave her a startled glance, and slipped nervously round to the other side of Olive. "You want someone to look after you," cried Becky. "You can't look after yourself. Anyone can see that."

Bluebeard did not answer; he went on as if he had not heard what she said.

"Tatcho is not marrying Mr. Peckwater for love; he's old enough to be her grandfather," he grumbled dismally, "and he isn't even handsome. He may have got a good heart, but you can't see that, and it doesn't make him good-looking, anyhow. She is

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under another spell; that's what's the matter with her; and it compels her to love gold more than anything or anybody. I have met a lot of people who suffer like that."

"If it is another spell—you broke the other," said Olive, "and there must be a way of breaking this one."

"There is a way of breaking every spell," agreed Bluebeard, "but the trouble is to get the recipe. If only you could—"

He was rudely and painfully interrupted by Mr. Peel, who unceremoniously bumped the chair into him from behind with such force that he staggered and fell into it backwards on top of Mr. Peabody's feet. Writhing with agony, as if the rheumatics made his feet tender, he bundled Bluebeard out savagely, and beckoning Olive questioned her concerning the snuff-box.

"I have an idea that it belongs to me," he said; "mine was stolen from me several years ago."

He held out his hand, and desired Olive to allow him to examine the article; but Mr. Peel, breaking off a heated wrangle with Becky, who complained that the wheel had gone over her toe, leaned above him in the chair, knocked his hand aside and held out his own in its place.

"Let me see it, child," he cried peremptorily. "He is deceiving you. I will soon tell you whether it is his box, and if it is not he shall not have it."

It was hard and needed courage to disobey him; he was a tall man and used to be a Member of Parliament, and she was a mere child and felt a very little one, standing there in the snow before him; but a thought of Tony strengthened her; and as soon as she had determined to do what she knew she ought to her task became easier, as all tasks always do, and those who had been inclined to work against her sided with her, as similar waverers in similar circumstances always will.

"Don't give it to either of them," urged Dick Whittington, who had himself seemed until now on the verge of asking her to lend it to him, "and don't be afraid, they shall not take it from you whilst I am here."

"You!" cried $1\frac{1}{2}$ scornfully. "You'd take it yourself if I wasn't here! Hold tight to it, miss, and don't you trust anyone but me."

"And me," put in the Lord Mayor's Globe Metal Coachman pompously. "Let me see any man lay a hand on a Lord Mayor's grandchild whilst I am standing by!"

"He's all right," $1\frac{1}{2}$ told Olive privately. "I can

answer for him, and for me, but not for any of the others. You can always depend on a policeman and a man of sentiment. He's one, and I'm both."

"If he is not precisely both," said the Coachman, joking with dignity, "he is at least $1\frac{1}{2}$."

At the sight of the two of them, manfully drawn up beside her, with Dick Whittington and Bluebeard supporting them, and Becky looking ashamed of herself and anxious to regain Olive's good opinion, Mr. Peel and Mr. Peabody dropped their bullying tones and laughed and pretended they had only been playing, and made themselves extraordinarily affable.

"Did I understand you to say, my dear," enquired Mr. Peabody genially, "that you are going to the British Museum?"

"Yes," said Olive. "Gog and Magog thought perhaps the Sphinx could tell me how I might help them and—but wait a minute, please."

She slipped lightly away from them and ran to Old Mother Hubbard, who was beckoning her over the edge of the fountain.

"Is it a real snuff-box you have got there, my love?" she cried wheedlingly. "And is there any snuff in it? Nothing I like better than a nice pinch of snuff, and I have not had one since they

turned me into a nymf'. Mermaids don't take snuff, as a rule. I almost forget what it's like myself. Lend me the pretty box, there's a dearie. Only one pinch—that's all I'll take, and who's to miss one?—than you shall have it back again immediate."

"Oh, Mother Hubbard," said Olive regretfully, "how unkind and deceitful everybody seems! I can't trust anyone. You know—don't you?—that if I lend the box to anybody and they use it, I shall never be able to find my brother any more? I did not think you could be as wicked and cunning and cruel as the rest of them!"

Old Mother Hubbard hung her head in shame and remorse.

"You are right, my dear; I am a disgraceful old woman. If I was myself I never could have thought of such meanness. It is not me, but the naughty mermaid part of me that makes me behave so badly. If you were to be changed into a mermaid and had to live in the wet, you would soon be the same as me—you would feel that desperate you would hardly mind what you did so long as you got rid of your tail. Think of that, and forgive me. It isn't easy to walk in the right path when you haven't got a leg to stand on. Go your ways,

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my dear, and leave the poor, miserable old woman before she is tempted to try and cheat you again."

Olive was too tender-hearted to be unforgiving; besides she thought there really was some excuse for Old Mother Hubbard, though not much.

"I am going to the British Museum," she said, struck with a happy idea, "and I will ask the Sphinx about you, too. Perhaps she will tell me why the spell is put upon you, and how it can be broken, and if I can come and break it for you, I will."

Without lingering to hear Mother Hubbard's praise and gratitude, Olive ran back to the others, and presently promised Bluebeard that she would see if she could find out from the Sphinx about the new spell that was on Princess Pearl, the Tatcho Girl, and how it might be removed, so as to make both her and him happy at a single stroke. In the simple kindness of her heart she even tried to cheer Mr. Peel and Mr. Peabody by offering to make enquiries and see if anything could be done for them.

They appeared delighted at her offer, and anxious prove their appreciation of it.

"It's a good stiff journey to the Museum from here," remarked Mr. Peabody. "This is a large chair, and you are only little. If you would like

to come and sit beside me in it Mr. Peel can easily push the two of us."

Mr. Peel very obligingly said he would be charmed to do so.

Accordingly, when Mr. Peabody squeezed himself to one side of his seat to make room for her, although $1\frac{1}{2}$ frowned and shook his head, Olive, not wishing to appear suspicious and unfriendly, climbed into the chair and settled herself comfortably next to him.

"Not too much room, but enough's as good as sufficient," cried Mr. Peabody jovially; adding, as Mr. Peel started and wheeled the chair faster and faster till he was wheeling it as fast as he could walk, "We shall be there in twenty minutes, and I will point out to you everything worth seeing that we pass on the road."

CHAPTER XIII

THE IDOLS WHO WINKED

Having no further fear of treachery, for she never dreamt that their intentions were not so innocent as they seemed, Olive chatted carelessly to Mr. Peabody, and occasionally glanced over her shoulder to answer some casual enquiry of Mr. Peel's; yet, all the while, she instinctively kept a tight hold on the snuff-box.

Consequently when, without the least warning, Mr. Peel and Mr. Peabody suddenly grabbed at it, both at the same time, neither of them got it. She tightened her clutch; there was a momentary struggle; then she jerked it free of them, but with such desperate violence that it slipped and flew clean out of her hand and went rolling in the snowy road, just as they were crossing Oxford Street.

It had scarcely touched the ground when she was out and had it again, even before $1\frac{1}{2}$ and Dick

Whittington could rush forward from behind the chair and reach it.

She turned upon Mr. Peel and Mr. Peabody, but checked the angry words on her lips and, altering her mind, disdainfully ignored them, and continued her journey afoot, Dick and $1\frac{1}{2}$ and the Globe Metal Polish Coachman marching sedately with her, a few paces in the rear.

There was no difficulty in getting into the Museum; Olive had feared there would be, but the gates stood open as if it were mid-day; and if it had been mid-day it could not have been lighter than the moon and the electric lamps and the snow made it.

The large courtyard looked so very large and desolate that Olive could not help feeling rather solitary, and peeped over her shoulder to hearten herself by making sure that her three staunch friends followed within call. Even if they had fallen away and left her to go on by herself she would have gone; however frightened and helpless she had felt, she was no coward and would not have turned back until she had done what she could for Gog and Magog, who had done so much for her.

So she resolutely mounted the broad flight of steps, and it was as she was doing so that she became conscious of the remarkable circumstance

that Magog's snuff-box was much heavier than it had been, and saw to her unspeakable wonder that it had grown larger. She could not credit her eyes, but stood still for a minute and held the box in her two hands to examine it. There could be no doubt whatever, it had grown in some miraculous manner to twice its original size. She thought possibly it had been damaged in some way when it fell, yet that did not seem to account for its remarkable growth either, and she continued her climb up the steps puzzling over this new mystery.

It was dark and shadowy under the lofty pillars at the top of the steps, and a big, ugly, grinning stone idol who came forward from the side of the portico and nodded merrily to her as she was passing in, startled her so that it was all she could do not to scream. She pushed open the swing-doors, and in the immense vestibule was stopped by one of those dusky, angular, awkward, stiff-jointed, half-dressed Egyptians such as you may see walking on Cleopatra's Needle with their elbows squared and their hands stuck straight out in front of them.

"A mortal, I believe?" he said, showing his teeth in an unpleasant smile.

"Yes, sir," said Olive faintly.

"What is your business, pray?"



"WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE? A SNUFF-BOX! THE VERY THING. ALLOW ME!"

"Please, I want to see the Sphinx."

"I don't know whether you can. It's making some new riddles and this is its busy night. But I'll take your name up. Have you a card?"

Olive gasped a breathless "No."

"That's a pity. I must take something up, as a matter of etiquette, and as a kind of introduction, and as a pledge of good faith. What have you got there? A snuff-box! The very thing. Allow me!"

One of his stiff hands shot out, and he stooped to snatch the box, but Olive shrank back quickly and put her hand over it. She noticed, then and after, that though ever so many of the People of the Night, here and elsewhere, asked for the box or sought to steal it, she had but to refuse gently and firmly to give it up, and not one of them made a further attempt to get it from her.

"Would this do instead?" she enquired trembling, and offered him a bright penny that she had meant to put in her money-box.

He accepted it sullenly, tested it between his teeth, dropped it into his pouch as if he intended to keep it, and went, telling her to stand on the mat, and not make the floor dirty, till he came back. He was not long gone, and on his return he

said the Sphinx was very busy but would see her by-and-by.

"You had better wait in the drawing-room," he observed, "you're too late for tea, but they are having some music, and it will do to pass the time."

Olive went after him into a vast stone hall that was badly lighted: a long, spacious, dim, mysterious place, filled with a confusing multitude of people. There were massive stone and marble Pharaohs seated on stone or marble thrones and evidently alive, for they stroked their beards, and now and then changed their attitudes; there were huge gods, some hideous and some splendid, leaning against the walls, or posed on granite pedestals; there were bulky, weird figures, part man and part beast or bird; there were extinct and awful birds and animals, like the dodo and the mastodon, lounging or lying about in considerable numbers; and there were all sorts of deformed, and large or squat, and fascinating or forbidding idols gathered in groups or brooding singly, all of painted wood or solid stone, and all of them alive and looking grimmer and grislier because of the blue-dimness of the light.

Two quaint figures attracted Olive and repelled her very oddly. They were a pair of stunted stone

idols with distorted faces of the most outrageous ugliness, squatting cross-legged, side by side, on so low a pedestal that their heads were on a level with her own. Avoiding the thickest of the crowd, she found herself close to these two before she realised how repulsive they were in appearance, and she was powerless to do anything but stare at them, entranced, and shiver with a nameless dread. Their mouths were stretched in a ghastly leer, and each of them had two corner teeth that stuck out like tusks; their noses were flat and broad, and one of them was chipped, and their eyes were drooping as if they were thinking over what they were laughing villainously to themselves about.

Olive wished she had gone round the other side of the hall and missed them; and when, all of a sudden, first one and then the other opened his eyes wide and winked at her, not once but several times in quick succession, she was so shocked and startled that she stepped back in a panic and trod on somebody's foot.

"I—I beg your pardon," she stammered, glancing nervously up at the stout marble gentleman, wrapped in a marble tablecloth, to whom the foot belonged, "I hope I haven't hurt you?"

"Why can't you stand still and be quiet," he

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replied irritably, "and listen to the music? You'll be turned out presently, if you don't, and so you ought to be."

CHAPTER XIV

THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX

His severe reproof made Olive feel ashamed. She had not noticed until now that everybody was moving back, and the whole company were ranging themselves in standing or sitting postures by the wall, so as to leave the centre of the Hall unoccupied ; and, before they were all settled, from the farthest corner of the dim, misty place came a slow, solemn procession of Mummies, ungainly, gruesome, shuffling. As they approached, a brisk and lively music, that had been playing all the while, sank and wearied to a thin, chilly, crooning melody that was like the ghost of a tune that had been dead a long time and was dreaming of coming to life again.

By degrees, the joyless, expressionless Mummies broke into a silent dance : they faced about and remained dancing in a long row in the space that had been cleared on the floor ; and presently one, who was more gorgeously dressed than the rest,

sprang out in front of the others, flung up his arms, shook his skinny legs free of their bandages, and whirled in a furious fandango that was the more astonishing and unnatural by comparison with the slow, decorous movements of his grim companions as well as with his own stiff, difficult jerkings of a moment before. He reeled and rolled and spun and jumped in a hushed, dumb ecstasy; then, at the highest pitch of his wild antics he stopped unexpectedly, struck a wooden, cornery attitude, and began to sing in a loud, scratchy voice like a gramophone:

IN THE MUSEUM.

All day from my place, lying shut in a case,
 I can watch them go by every minute—
 The queer things that come to the great Mu-se-um
 Just to stare at the rarities in it:
 By the dozen and score they walk in at the door,
 And I'm never astonished to see 'em,
 But always in vain do I try to explain
 Why the man at the door lets them go out again,
 For they *ought* to be in the Museum!

As they strut in their pride,
 With amazement I've cried:
 Why, when once they're inside,
 Do they free 'em?
 If their owners but knew
 What it's right they should do
 They'd present them unto
 The Museum!

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The style of their dress is grotesque, more or less,
And their manner too silly or solemn is ;
Such a singular style would have made people smile
By the Nile in the days of the Ptolemies ;
Round about us with chaff, " These are Mummies ! " they laugh ;
But I'd much rather see them than be 'em ;
With their giggles and stares and superior airs,
I reflect whilst I view them alone or in pairs,
Oh, they *ought* to be in the Museum !

In these Halls, as you see, there are dwelling with me
Many handsome and natural creatures,
And my spirit it piques when we're grinned at by freaks
With such very peculiar features
Who murmur, " Oh, dear ! aren't they funny and queer ! "
Or exalt us with loud eulo-gium,
For, despite their conceit, you will find, I repeat,
All the real curiosities out in the street,
Though they *ought* to be in the Museum !

As they strut in their pride,
With amazement I've cried :
Why, when once they're inside
Do they free 'em ?
If their owners but knew
What it's right they should do
They'd present them unto
The Museum !

" There's a lot more ; that's not nearly the end of it," he remarked fanning himself, " but I am too dry to sing you the rest."

" I wonder why they call them Mummies ? " Olive thought to herself.

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But she must have thought out loud, for the chief Mummy glared at her and said curtly,

"Because it rhymes with dummies, of course."

Without giving Olive a chance to apologise, he began to spin on his toes, and, as he spun, the long strip of cloth he had shaken loose re-wound itself tightly round his legs and body till he could only dance jerkily and with difficulty, like the other Mummies, who all jiggered in procession after him into the dark recesses of the Hall, and so out of sight.

The dim light in the place had been growing pale and lurid and was now like the dusky flare that gleams over everything when a thunderstorm is getting ready to burst, and all the stone and wooden idols and images loomed ghastly through it. Nevertheless, Olive was not so much afraid of the largest and most mysterious of them as she was of the two dumpy heathen gods on the pedestal who still snapped their piggish eyes at her every time she ventured to glance at them.

"I am rather frightened of those gentlemen there," she said, at length, to a good-natured foreigner, who had the fine head and beard of a man and the body and legs of a horse. "I hope they will not do me any harm."

"They can't!" he returned with a laugh.

"But they keep winking at me," she pointed out.

"Only their fun."

"I thought perhaps it was a sign that they were wicked. Good people do not wink, do they?"

"They do if they know how to," he said. "I do it sometimes myself, when I feel better than usual."

"Is that why they do it, then, do you think?"

"Shouldn't wonder. Or it's just as likely that they can't help it. It is an affliction with some folks, same as stammering is. Are they friends of yours? You would not care to acknowledge their politeness and go and speak to them?"

"Oh, no! I am afraid of them, thank you. Who are they?"

"I have not been introduced to them. They are strangers here, like yourself, and I fancy from the looks of them that they have not learnt to speak yet, so it is no use saying anything to them. You might wink at them, though. I daresay they would take that as a compliment."

Olive glanced at them shrinkingly, and they were winking and blinking at her now with a sort of reckless eagerness; their eyelids opened and shut so rapidly that the friction seemed to make their eyes glow and glisten till sparks began to fly out

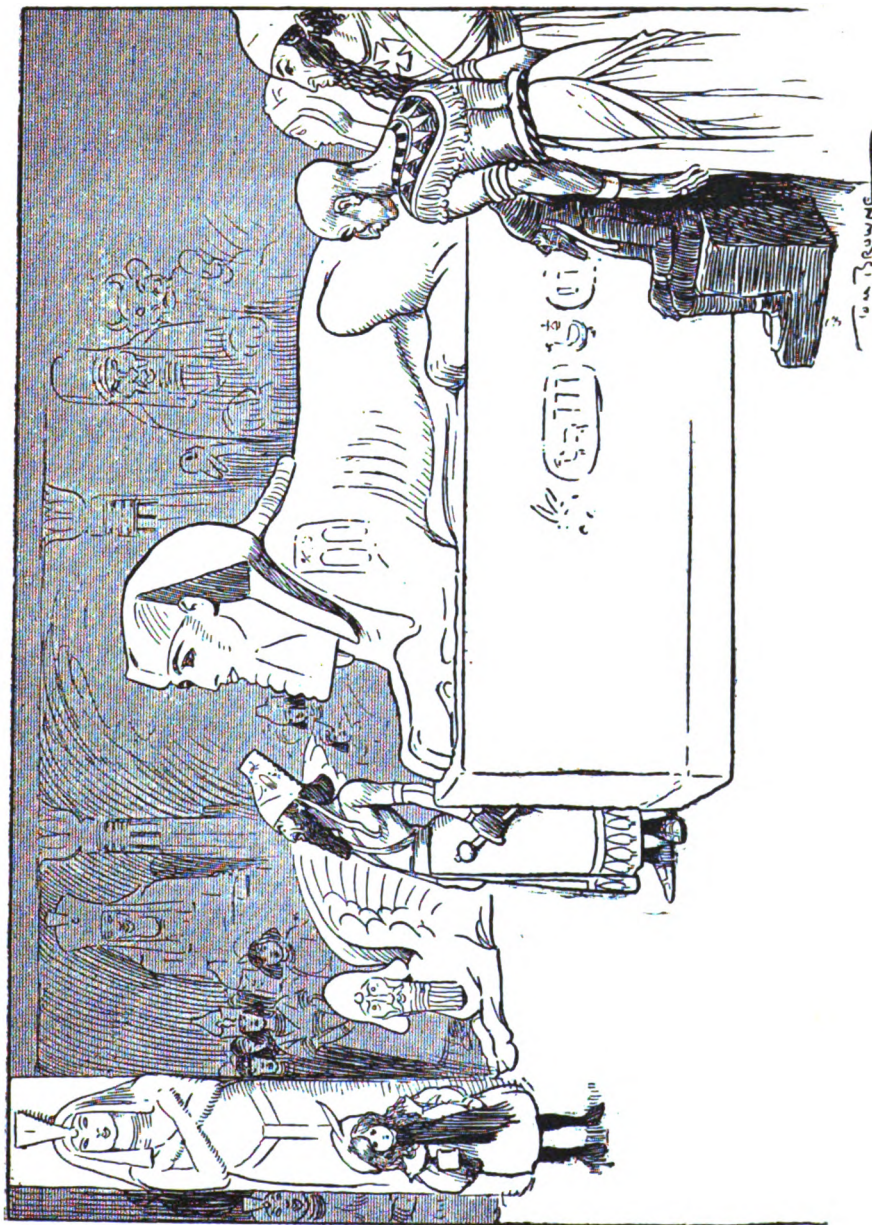
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of them, and all of a sudden there was a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a sharp succession of flashes which kept the whole Hall so dazzlingly bright that it took Olive several minutes to get used to it, and then, when she was able to see again, she saw that the throng all about her was much greater than ever, and in the centre of it sat a marvellously beautiful woman with the body and limbs of a leopard.

She sat there as calm and motionless as if the quietness of all the lonely desert places of the earth were heavy upon her; there was a contemptuous, dreamy smile on her face, as if she knew the folly of all the pride and wisdom of mankind; and Olive recognised, for she had seen pictures of it, that this was the Sphinx.

She stood and stared, and stared at it, awestricken. She hung back from approaching, not so much because the marvellous creature was so majestic and so more than human, as because there was a vague something in the expression and beauty of the face that made it oddly familiar; there was a cold gleam of dislike in the dreamy, lustrous eyes, a sneering flicker at the corners of the mouth which reminded her so terribly of Aunt Prue that I think she would have crept out of the Hall and run away



"LET THE MORTAL CHILD APPROACH!"

if an ancient Egyptian priest, who stood before the Sphinx in stony robes and a tall stone hat that was covered with circles and triangles and other puzzling symbols, had not called in a deep and hollow voice,

"Let the mortal child approach!"

The crowd of men and women and gods and birds and beasts swept aside to make way for her, as if a great wind had blown through them, and there was a path for Olive right up to the feet of the Sphinx.

Trembling in every limb and frightened and bewildered, she went forward, curtsying low, and paused with her hands clasped behind her and her heart fluttering in her throat till it almost suffocated her.

She was so flurried and confused that she could not think how to begin; and when she did begin, at last, the priest silenced her.

"You need explain nothing," he said; "the Sphinx knows all that has happened. You wish to learn whether Princess Pearl, the Tatcho Girl, is under a second spell?"

"If you please," answered Olive.

"She is," said the priest; then having gazed into the calm face of the Sphinx he went on solemnly: "She loves Bluebeard, but she is under a second spell that compels her to love gold better

than everything else and to despise anyone who has none."

"Can the second spell be broken, please?"

"The Sphinx did not weave it," said the priest, "and will not break it."

"Oh, but can you please tell me who will?" faltered Olive.

"There is only one other who can. She placed the spell on the Princess because she is jealous of her beauty, and you may find her this night on a Hill whose name I may not mention, but its godmother was a flower, and it stands near a wood that is not a wood. My mistress will tell you no more of her than that. You wish to know also why the spell was placed upon Old Mother Hubbard?"

Olive bowed meekly.

"It was because of her inhumanity in tormenting the poor dog by pretending to go to the cupboard to get it a bone when she must have known that the cupboard was bare. The Sphinx did not weave that spell, and will not break it."

"Is there nobody else who will?"

"Only that Other One who holds her Court tonight on the Hill that had a flower for a godmother and stands near the wood that is not a wood,"

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the priest droned solemnly. "You have asked two things. You may ask but one more."

"It is about Gog and Magog—how can I help them, please?" cried Olive imploringly. "They have suffered through being kind to me and—Oh, please tell me where they are, and what I can do that will do them good."

"There they are," cried the priest, pointing abruptly over her shoulder with his wand, "and you can save them easily—but the Sphinx will not say how!"

CHAPTER XV

OLIVE HELPS GOG, BUT CAN DO NOTHING FOR MAGOG

Looking round, Olive saw that the priest was pointing to the two dumpy idols on the pedestal—the two who had distressed her with their continual winking.

“Are those,” she gasped, “Gog and Magog?”

But whilst the words were on her lips, the lightnings ceased to thob in the air, the great light went out, and the Sphinx and Its priest seemed to go out with it, leaving the vast Hall dim and shadowy as before, and all the strange creatures in it dim and shadowy too.

Olive stepped up to the pedestal timidly, and made a closer examination of the two idols.

They did not look a bit like Gog and Magog, but kept blinking and snapping their eyes at her perseveringly, and she fancied there was a kind of wistful sadness in their ugly expressions, in spite of the broad, savage grins they could not help having,

for they were carved on them in the stone. They certainly were uncommonly hideous, and their tusks gave them a villainous and brutal aspect that was worse even than ugliness.

Olive shuddered, and withdrew a little from them. Possibly the Sphinx had deceived her, she reflected, and these were not Gog and Magog, after all; and if they were, what could she do? They were too heavy for her to lift, even if she could overcome her loathing and handle them; besides, the man at the door would stop her and want to lock her up for trying to steal them; and if he didn't—she could not make them any better by merely carrying them away to some other place.

She was still hesitating in this perplexity when a commotion arose at the door, as if certain of the stony people were struggling to keep out someone who was fighting to get in; and after a while the mob broke and scattered, and Olive was intensely relieved to see $1\frac{1}{2}$ and Dick Whittington manfully forcing a passage through.

"Wondered what had become of you, miss," panted $1\frac{1}{2}$. "Mr. Peel can't shove Mr. Peabody up the steps, and it would be all the same if he could, for they wouldn't let him come in. They wouldn't allow any of us to pass, but you were so

long that we began to think something must have happened and forced our way in—me and Dick Whittington, though I didn't want him. I ordered him to wait outside for me, but he wouldn't. Never knows when he isn't wanted."

He wiped his red face on his red handkerchief. His helmet and blue uniform looked ridiculously out of place there, and the wooden and stone antiquities regarded him coldly; but he did not seem to mind—he just glared back at them as if he felt quite capable of arresting any of them who created a disturbance or interfered with him in the execution of his duty. Dick looked gallant and bold enough to take care of her too, and Olive was delighted to see them, and knew she was absolutely safe now that she had them by her.

"These are Gog and Magog," she whispered eagerly.

I $\frac{1}{2}$ eyed the two idols doubtfully.

"Who says so?" he asked. "Who identifies them?"

"The Sphinx says so," cried Olive.

"Ah, but she wasn't on oath," he objected sceptically.

"This is what they have been changed into," Olive told him. "The Sphinx would not say what

was the matter with them, but says I can easily make them better, only she will not tell me how to. I wish you could think of a way."

I $\frac{1}{2}$ thought.

"When anyone's hurt," he said musingly, "or anything painful happens to 'em, what do you generally do to make them better?"

Olive shook her head.

"Kiss them," she suggested at random.

"Not a bad idea!" I $\frac{1}{2}$ sighed, and gazed at her pensively. "I'm not feeling very well myself," he said.

Dick Whittington said nothing, but frowned on him fiercely.

"Do you think that could really be of any use?" questioned Olive.

"I feel sure it would do me a world of good," said I $\frac{1}{2}$.

"But I mean these. They are so ugly and terrible I—I don't like to."

"They cannot harm you," Dick declared. "But if you are nervous, don't have anything to do with them. Leave them alone."

She was sorry to hear Dick say that; it sounded so heartless. If these actually were Gog and Magog enchanted, it would be mean and cowardly to

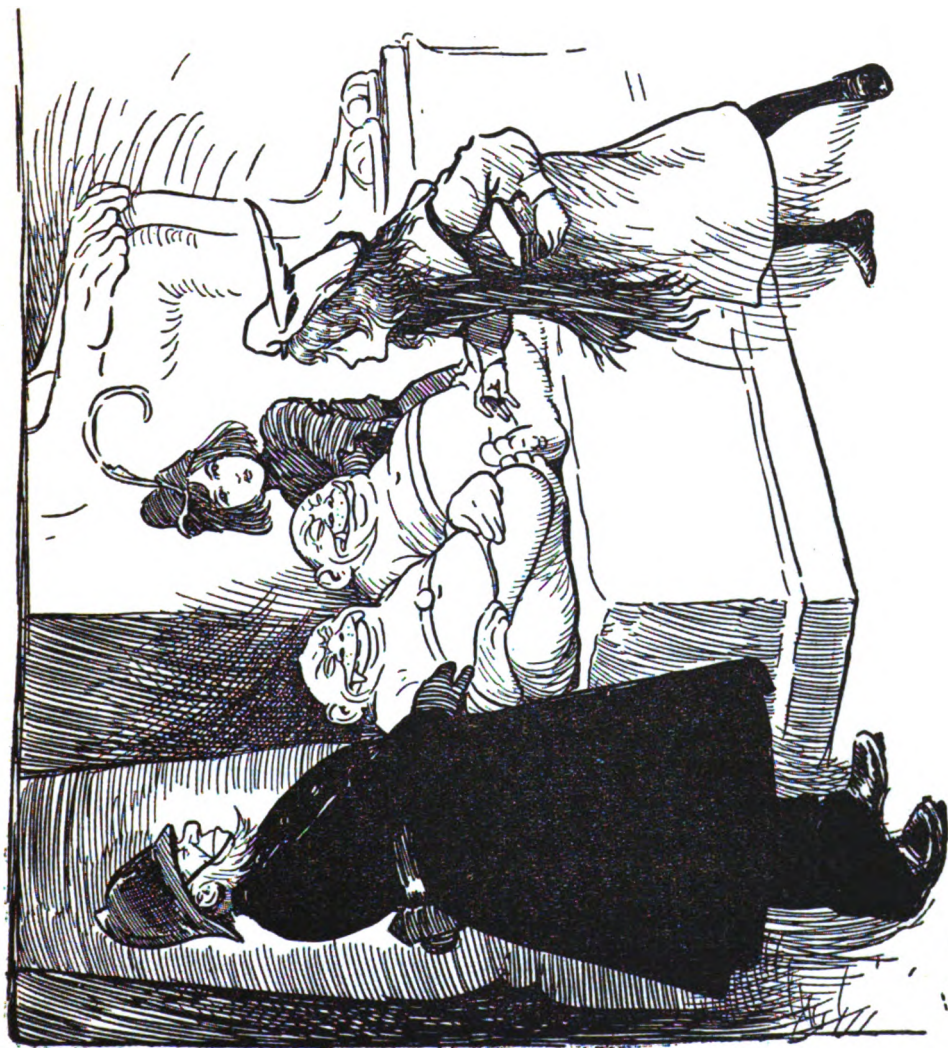
desert them simply because they were ugly and she did not like to touch them. She had used to count kissing a fairly reliable remedy, and though she had rather outgrown her belief in it, as she could think of no other it was only right and kind that she should give it a trial.

"I don't see how it can do you any harm," observed I¹/₂, when she put this view of it to him; "and as you say, it might do them good. From information received, I believe that it does good sometimes, though I have never had any evidence of it. If you're nervous on account of their being ugly, why not shut your eyes? You are not bound to look at anything that's not worth seeing. And I don't mind holding these two images whilst you try the treatment, if that would make you more comfortable like."

Dick Whittington said he did not mind holding them either. He jealously laid hands on one immediately and, not to be outdone, I¹/₂ seized the other.

Olive still hesitated; then made up her mind at a rush, shut her eyes tightly, leaned forward, felt for one of them, touched the idol Dick was holding, and kissed it in haste.

But nothing happened.



Tom Browne

"IF YOU'RE NERVOUS ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR BEING UGLY, WHY NOT SHUT YOUR EYES?"

She stood expectantly; but the image remained as stolid as ever; except that its eyes were blinking more frantically.

"It is no use, you see," remarked Dick.

"Aren't you going to try mine?" remonstrated $1\frac{1}{2}$. "May as well give 'em both a trial. What doesn't suit one might be the very thing for the other. One man's load of care is another man's Christmas pudding, you know."

Olive had lost faith in the remedy, but partly that she might leave no chance untried, partly because she fancied $1\frac{1}{2}$ would feel slighted if she did not kiss his image as well, she shut her eyes very tightly again and kissed it.

And this time she was only just quick enough. She had barely pressed the stone with her lips and drawn back a pace shuddering with disgust at the uncanny coldness of the touch, when there was a dazzling flash and a terrific report: she had a blurred vision of $1\frac{1}{2}$ twirling violently over backwards and rolling with his feet in the air, then they were all enveloped in a thick, blinding smoke.

She could see nothing; it was as much as she could do to keep from screaming with terror; but Dick took her hand and whispered to her not to be afraid.

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Presently a gruff voice came out of the smoke.

"That's better!" it said. "I am coming round. I am almost myself again."

As the smoke began to thin and clear away, she made out the burly shape of one of the giants standing in front of her, and noticed that one of the idols had gone from the pedestal, behind which $1\frac{1}{2}$ had risen, ruffled and crumpled, and was wiping his helmet on his sleeve.

"They say one good turn deserves another," he grumbled, "but I've had the other, and seems to me it isn't good enough."

"Did it hurt you?" enquired Olive sympathetically.

"Made a bump on top of my head," he groaned. "A big bump too, and I've got nothing to put on it to make it better. I don't know whether a kiss might——"

He coughed, and twisted his features as if he were suffering untold agonies; and though Dick Whittington frowned as if he would like to raise another bump on him, Olive very kindly said that if he would stoop and put his finger on the exact spot she would kiss it for him, with pleasure; and as soon as she had done so he beamed all over his face, stroked his head, put his helmet on, and said the swelling was entirely gone and he had never felt so well in his life.

There was no smoke left by now, and they could see it was Gog who had been restored.

"I had not got it so bad as he has," he said, pointing to the other image, which still winked despairingly. "It was Magog's snuff-box, you see, and he gave it to you, so he was punished with a worse attack than I had. I reckon it will take a lot more than a kiss to cure him."

"What would do it, do you think?" asked Olive.

Gog wagged his shaggy beard uncertainly.

"I don't know," he confessed. "I heard what the Sphinx was saying to you though I could not talk, for we hadn't the power of speech like the others here. No doubt the person who is to be found to-night on the Hill whose godmother was a flower could tell us the right thing to do for him. Poor old Magog, I should feel dreadfully lonely in the Guildhall without him."

"Where is the Hill whose godmother was a flower? Do you know?"

Again Gog wagged his beard regretfully.

"I wish I could guess," he said, "but I was always a bad hand at riddles. I'll tell you what, though! Father Christmas might guess it. He's a dabster at them!"

"Oh, yes!" cried Olive. "But where does he live?"

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"There are hundreds of him about just now," said Gog. "They live in all manner of places."

"I met one last night," Dick interposed, "and he told me he lived on a hoarding at the end of Whitehall. He is a Tom Smith's Christmas Cracker one, and his pockets are full of them. He showed me some."

"He would be the very man for us!" cried Gog. "We will go and put it to him."

"He will be off the hoarding now, though, walking about, won't he?" said Olive.

"Not that one. Not if he was off last night," answered Gog. "There are so many of them, they take it in turns to come off until Christmas Eve, then they all come off together, because then they have to go round delivering their goods, and filling the stockings. They are all Santa Clauses, you know, miss. This one on the Whitehall hoarding will be at home to-night, if Whittington met him out last night, and he can speak to us and tell us what we wish to find out about, though he is not permitted to come off."

"Let us hurry, then," urged Olive.

"Yes, lets," Gog agreed. "I will take him with us," he picked up the other idol and placed it under his arm; "it'll save having to come back for him."

CHAPTER XVI

FATHER CHRISTMAS ANSWERS THE RIDDLE

Until now Olive had been so excited that though she had kept a firm grasp on the snuff-box she had not noticed that it had gone on growing and getting larger and heavier all the time.

Now, however, as she moved with the others towards the way out, she was suddenly aware that the weight of the box was almost beyond her strength; it had so increased in size that she had to embrace it round the sides and carry it before her pretty much as a man carries a drum.

"Oh, do wait a minute, please!" she called. "This is so big and heavy it is slipping out of my hands."

"I will carry it for you, miss," said $1\frac{1}{2}$ promptly.

"No, let me," cried Dick Whittington, pushing him aside.

"You can't trust anyone this time o' night except a policeman, miss," declared $1\frac{1}{2}$. "He's the only

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man who's numbered and marked in plain figures, so as there can be no mistakes about him. Give it to me, miss, and I'll carry it."

But Dick was obstinate, and would not give way.

Olive could not bear to see them quarrel, and did not wish to slight either of them; she had not the least doubt that she could trust them both, yet since she had to choose between the two it seemed natural to prefer a policeman to an ordinary man.

"I $\frac{1}{2}$ is older and stronger than you," she put it to Dick coaxingly. "Please let him carry it, and you walk with him and take care nobody steals it away from him, will you? That's best. Then I shall know it is in no danger, for you would fight for him if anyone interfered with him, wouldn't you?"

Dick said of course he would; and rather grudgingly consented to this arrangement.

You may guess how huge and heavy the snuff-box had become when I tell you that I $\frac{1}{2}$ found he could not bear it comfortably in his hands, but had to hoist it on his shoulder; and, so carrying it; he led the way out.

In the roomy vestibule the cornery priest who had attended the Sphinx overtook them.

"You will never be able to carry that snuff-box any distance," he remonstrated. "The Sphinx sent me to advise you to deposit it here and come back for it. If you insist on taking it with you, you are doomed to lose it."

"I cannot part with it," said Olive determinedly. "I must not trust anyone with it but my friends."

"We are your friends," argued the priest. "You will lose it if you trust it to any but us."

"Mr. 1½ and Dick Whittington are taking care of it," said Olive with quiet confidence. "They will not lose it."

"Very well. I have cautioned you." The priest spread his palms resignedly. "At all events, I will prove that we bear you no ill will. I will do what I can for you, and in the end you will see which really are your true friends. You have a long journey to go, and are too little to walk so far."

He waved his wand towards the darkness at the inner end of the vestibule, and, clicking his fingers, called,

"Tiny! Tiny!" as one might summon a pet dog.

Something enormous heaved and separated itself from the darkness, and emerged from it grunting.

It was as lumpy and as clumsy as an elephant,

but had a long writhing neck and a small head like a snake's, and no tail; its general appearance made you think what a railway engine would look like if it had stumpy legs instead of wheels. Some obsolete, antediluvian animal it was, and though it had a sly, sinful expression in its little bulging eyes, it seemed so tame and harmless that when the priest turned to lift Olive on to its back she offered no objection.

"When you have done with him," he said, "Tiny knows his way home. You have only to set him free."

He stepped aside, and they went on again as before, except that Olive was riding and so high up that her head was level with Gog's shoulder.

Outside, where the warm, white snow and the electric lamps were as dazzling as noonday sunshine, Mr. Peabody waited in his chair at the foot of the steps with Mr. Peel posed discontentedly behind it, and the Lord Mayor's Coachman lolled against the nearest wall, for he had been too languid and genteel to exert himself by going up after them.

Tiny tripped lightly down, and crossed the courtyard at such a pace that Mr. Peel could not push the chair fast enough, and was presently shouting to them to go slower.

But they were in a hurry. They had to find out

the name of that Hill and then make their way to it before daylight. So they paid no heed to him, and the faster Olive persuaded Tiny to run, the faster the others, even the Globe Metal Polish Coachman, bestirred themselves; and $1\frac{1}{2}$, with the snuff-box on his shoulder and Dick guarding him alertly, kept all the while just ahead of the party where Olive could have an eye on them.

"I fancied I saw something like a kangaroo round that corner we passed a minute ago," said Olive, by-and-by.

"Quite likely," Gog agreed. "There are queerer things than kangaroos about in the night, now-a-days."

"It was a jet black one, and I thought I saw Mother Shipton there speaking to it."

"That's very likely too. There's a Premier Bicycle Kangaroo that's as black as ink—a little one—"

"Oh, this was a great big one," cried Olive. "I suppose a kangaroo could understand what Mother Shipton said to it?"

"As easily as the Oxo Bull and the Griffin understood you," said Gog. "It's as intelligent as any horse, and if Mother Shipton has got hold of it she'll make it more mischievous than a monkey."

They proceeded in silence for a space, passing ever

so many people as they went, but very few of the sort that you see about during the day. There were girls and men of all nations, in all manner of fancy costumes; there were imps and children and animals as lovely as any you have seen in your most beautiful dreams and as hideous as any you have seen in the worst nightmare you ever had. They were all of them down off the hoardings and out for the night, running or strutting or strolling about, bowing to one another, and laughing and gossiping as if it had been the middle of the day and they were not doing anything at all extraordinary. The Monkey Brand Soap monkey had climbed the fountain at Piccadilly Circus and, squatting on top, where Mercury stands tiptoe all day, he was admiring his reflection in a brilliantly polished frying-pan. The Pink's Marmalade lion was rambling about, roaring at intervals and lashing its tail quite naturally. At the corner of Lower Regent Street the Wills's Gold Flake naval officer stood chatting politely with the two Bensdorp Cocoa peasant girls: they are all three very much cramped on their posters all day, because all except their heads and shoulders has to be crushed out of sight, so at night-time they are glad to climb out and stretch themselves and move about a bit.

But they are luckier than the Reids' Stout young

man; I daresay you have seen the picture on the hoardings that shows nothing of him except a slice of his face and one arm, with a tankard of beer held out in his hand. Well, at night, it seems, he can't get through the little door from which his arm is coming out, but his arm becomes real and sticks straight out from the poster, and the tankard of ale in his hand becomes real also; and each time they went past his advertisement $1\frac{1}{2}$ stopped and put the snuff-box down for a moment and took the tankard out of the young man's hand and drank what was in it. Olive was rather sorry to see that, and once spoke to him about it, but he assured her that it did him no harm, for it was only like having a drink in a beautiful dream and did not really count, though it was uncommonly refreshing.

Then there was the Velma Chocolate dog, too, and the Rudge-Whitworth cycling lady, and I don't know how many more—farmers, dairymaids, soldiers, sailors, negroes, and fashionable ladies and gentlemen connected with the tailoring and dressmaking trades: in fact, all the human beings and animals that are stuck fast on the hoardings until midnight and then come off and look so real that you might pass them in the streets and never suspect that they were not.

The Sandow gentleman in his bathing costume had fixed his gymnastic apparatus to the railings in Waterloo Place and was going through all his exercises with immense enjoyment and looked as if he were getting healthier and more muscular every minute and didn't feel chilly in the least.

"When I grow up," said Olive with a sigh of rapture, "I think I shall go to bed all day and come out at night. It's much nicer."

"Everything's nice till you're used to it," observed Gog.

"Are we near Whitehall yet? It is farther than I thought it would be," said Olive, after an interval. "I suppose we are going the shortest way?"

"Oh, yes, miss," cried $1\frac{1}{2}$, glancing back at her. "But in London, you know, the shortest way to anywhere is always the longest."

As they rounded Trafalgar Square again and were entering Whitehall Olive had a second glimpse of the Black Kangaroo: it was dodging cunningly after them, and she called Gog's attention to it.

"I see it," he said, as it disappeared down a byway. "It is a poster animal—it's the Premier Bicycle Kangaroo, but Mother Shipton has made it grow ten times as large as it is on the hoarding. She would never do that without a reason. I

wonder what trick she is up to now ? ”

“I don’t think Mother Shipton likes me,” Olive told him. “She is my Aunt Prue—at least, I think she is, but I am not quite sure. And she said when we were in Trafalgar Square before that she had taken Tony away and lost him, and would not let us ever find him any more.”

“Ah!” Gog reflected. “We had best keep a sharp look out for that Black Kangaroo, anyhow. It is all right, by itself, but if Mother Shipton has been hypnotising it and enlarging it there is no saying what villainy it won’t be capable of.”

He was as uneasy as Olive was; but though they kept glancing back at frequent intervals they saw no further sign of the Kangaroo—until too late.

Opposite the Horse Guards’, in Whitehall, $1\frac{1}{2}$ called a halt, and stood the snuff-box on the ground for a rest.

“It has grown a dreadful lot since I have had it,” he remarked mopping the perspiration from his brow. “If it goes on growing at this rate it will be as big as a house before morning. It’s so heavy now that I don’t believe I can carry it a step farther, unless somebody helps me.”

“I’ll help you,” said Dick Whittington readily. “Let me take hold of one end of it.”

He eyed him with disfavour.

"You haven't got muscle enough," he objected. "Besides, here's the Lord Mayor's Coachman, he's the proper party to do it, him being in a manner connected with the City. You leave it to him. He's stronger than you and can be trusted, and him and me can do it between us easy."

Dick was beginning with a hot and hasty reply, but Olive leaned down from Tiny's back to murmur to him that she trusted him entirely and would feel that the box was safer if he allowed the two others to carry it whilst he remained free to protect them from anyone who might try to interfere with it; and she told him about the Black Kangaroo.

This proof of her confidence gratified Dick very much, and he at once undertook to do as she wished.

"What place is this?" Olive asked Gog, whilst they rested.

It was the Horse Guards', he informed her. There was a broad gateway, and on each side of it was a sort of stone porch with a door in it, and one was shut and the other was open. At the open doorway stood a sentry on horseback, his gleaming brass helmet, his steel breastplate, scarlet

coat and white breeches showing vividly against the blackness of the opening behind him.

"Why is there no sentry at the other side door?" Olive questioned.

"There is," said $1\frac{1}{2}$, "but he is inside. They can't both be out at the same time, you know."

"How funny! But why can't they?"

"It's impossible. The machinery isn't made to do that. This one is out because it is a fine night. If it happened to be wet the other one would come out and this one would go in."

"Why do they do that?"

"They can't help themselves," cried $1\frac{1}{2}$. "It's the machinery makes 'em do it. Haven't you seen them little weather-houses where the old man comes out when it's bad weather and the old woman comes out when it is set fair? Well, this place is made like that. There is a long plank with a soldier on each end of it, and it turns on a wheel in the middle, so that as one soldier swings out the other is bound to swing in. All done by clock-work; and which sentry's out and which one's in depends on the state of the weather. See?"

"I wish the other one would come out," said Olive musingly.

"I can easily make him," laughed $1\frac{1}{2}$. "I do it

now and then, just to pass the time, when I'm strolling about off duty and feel lonesome and don't know what to do."

He moved nearer to the sentry, gazed up into the sky, coughed, and exclaimed in a loud voice,

"It's starting to snow again! I felt a flake on my cheek."

A kind of tremble shook the sentry all over, then he glided swiftly and smoothly back into the depths of the doorway, and the door shut on him; and as it was shutting the other small door flew open and the other sentry popped out. It was marvellous how quickly and silently it was done. But the new sentry soon discovered that he had been deceived; he paused a minute, then he gradually backed in, his door shut on him with a click, and the first sentry reappeared, and remained.

"Isn't it lovely! I do wish Tony was here," sighed Olive. "He would so enjoy this. But hadn't we better go on now? I am afraid we may be too late."

So $1\frac{1}{2}$ and the Globe Metal Polish Lord Mayor's Coachman picked up the snuff-box, catching hold of the little handles there were at each end of it, and went forward again.

Right at the end of Whitehall, where they came

full in view of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, there was a high hoarding that ran all along and round the corner into Great George Street. There were a number of posters on it and the lettering on all of them remained perfect, but every picture was gone and had left a gap in its place, with a single exception, and that was the picture of Father Christmas. He was an advertisement stuck on the boards in Great George Street: a burly, ruddy, beaming Tom Smith's Christmas Cracker Father Christmas, with an armful of Christmas Crackers.

"Hah!" he shouted genially, as they approached. "What are you all playing at? Where did you get that animal? I thought he was locked in the Museum. I don't remember you. Are you a poster child?" he asked Olive. "What do you advertise?"

Olive introduced herself, and went on to tell him how the Sphinx had lent Tiny to her, and to let him know, in as few words as possible, the object of their visit.

"We thought you were good at conundrums," she concluded.

"So I am," he boasted. "You ask me one and see."

"Well," Olive proceeded, "the Sphinx said we

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could find out something that we are very anxious to know if we went before daybreak and enquired of somebody who can be found to-night on the Hill that had a flower for a godmother and stands near the Wood that is not a Wood."

Father Christmas wrinkled his white-haired visage in merry laughter.

"That's a very easy one. Never heard a simpler one in my life!" he protested. "Here! Take hold! Pull this one with me, and you'll find that very riddle and the answer inside."

He leaned out of the hoarding and held a large Cracker towards Olive; seated aloft on Tiny she was just a nice height for him to reach her.

"You take that end, and hold tight," he said. "Now, then—pull!"

They pulled, and pulled; it was a mighty Cracker and so strong that Olive began to fear he would pull her clean out of her seat before it would give way and go off, but suddenly there was a fierce little spit of fire, a crisp bang, and the Cracker was in halves and a slip of paper fluttering out of it to the ground.

Dick Whittington sprang at the paper at once, picked it up and handed it to her, and there was her question on it with the answer all in print.



"PULL THIS ONE WITH ME, AND YOU'LL FIND THAT VERY RIDDLE AND THE ANSWER INSIDE."

“The person to be seen is Titania, the Fairy Queen,” she read aloud, “and the Hill is Primrose Hill, which is near St. John’s Wood.”

CHAPTER XVII

HOW THE SNUFF-BOX WAS STOLEN

But the explosion of that Cracker seemed to upset everything.

Just as Olive raised her eyes, after reading out the answer, she saw $1\frac{1}{2}$ dart suddenly from beside the snuff-box and grapple fiercely with a ragged, skulking wretch who had been sneaking warily by—he dashed upon him as if he were stung to madness by the mere sight of him, nipped him in both hands and shook and shook and shook him till the wonder was that he did not fall all to pieces, he was so ragged and torn.

It was poor Bill Stickers, the tramp off the Pears' Soap poster.

"Here you are again, then, are you?" roared $1\frac{1}{2}$. "Don't you know you are to be prosecuted? Haven't you got any sense, or can't you read the warnings? You defy us, do you? Do you *want* to be prosecuted, eh?"

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He shook him afresh at every question, and the unhappy Bill Stickers whimpered with terror and quivered so violently that when $1\frac{1}{2}$ had finished shaking him he could not hold him still.

"I come this road a-purpose becous it isn't on your beat," whined Bill Stickers, "and I thought you'd be certain not to be here. I'm downright tired of it, I am. You keep on saying you're going to prosecute me, and yet you never do. Why don't you? Do it! Go on—do it, and get it done with, go on! I don't care what happens to me. Lock me up for not doing nothing—go on!—then p'raps I shall get a free pardon and have a little peace!"

Whilst he was blubbering like this and $1\frac{1}{2}$ was threatening what he would do to him if he didn't leave off, an ear-splitting scream arose, there was a sound of hissing and scrambling, and the two Nestle Cats were tumbling and whizzing in a wild knot, fighting recklessly to drive each other away from Dick Whittington. They looked pretty well as big as tigers, and were locked in such a tangle that it was impossible to distinguish the fat one from the thin one.

Dick beat them away with his stick, and in rolling and pitching this way and that, they smashed into the Lord Mayor's Coachman, threw him off

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his balance, and the next moment he was sprawling in the road with the bundle of cats raging and scratching on top of him.

Then, when the struggle and confusion were at their very worst, a flying shadow flicked past Olive, and before she could grasp the dreadful truth, the black Kangaroo was in amongst them, snatched the deserted snuff-box up in its forepaws, slipped it into its pouch, and, with a hop, skip and a jump, was gone.

Quick as it was though, $1\frac{1}{2}$ must have been quicker. Everything happened with such lightning rapidity that Olive scarcely saw how it did happen; but as the Kangaroo snatched the snuff-box, $1\frac{1}{2}$ released Bill Stickers, hurled himself head-first at it, and, in the twinkling of an eye—there was the Kangaroo vanishing in three or four immense leaps with $1\frac{1}{2}$ clinging on round its neck, his legs fluttering in the air like streamers, and his helmet jerked off and bounding and bowling along in the road.

“After them;” gasped Dick Whittington; and in a flash he was on the back of the fat Cat, using his stick as a jockey uses his whip. “After them—and if you don’t lose sight of them you shall be the one I’ll adopt—you shall be my Cat. Quick!”

“Hi! Here! Come here! I don’t care if I break



Tom Browne

QUICK AS IT WAS, THOUGH, I $\frac{1}{2}$ MUST HAVE BEEN QUICKER.

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my neck over it!" the Lord Mayor's Coachman regained his feet with surprising alacrity and at a bound was astride Bill Stickers, back, with his legs across his shoulders; no acrobat could have managed it neater or more nimbly. "You can run, and I can't," he panted. "Run, fellow, run! Don't let me lose them, and you shall never be prosecuted—if you are, I'll bail you out and pay your fines myself. Gee! Run!"

And Bill Stickers ran.

He went as if he were made of wheels and wings and the Coachman was as light as a feather. He caught up Dick Whittington on the Cat, and they tore round the next corner neck and neck; and the thin Cat having scampered a little way after them gave up the pursuit in despair.

"Oh, do let us be quick!" cried Olive, in tears. "We shall never overtake them!"

But Tiny stood stubbornly still.

"Hit him with something," shouted Father Christmas.

She clicked her lips, and smacked him with her hand, but Tiny swayed his lithe neck and little head with a sullen air and leered wickedly, and would not stir.

"Wake up! Get along! Gee!" yelled Gog, and

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he brought his huge palm down on Tiny's back with a resounding spank. "Hustle, you ugly brute, can't you!"

Then with unexpected smartness Tiny started.

He wheeled about lightly, and, instead of darting in pursuit of the others, dodged past Gog, and went galloping and hurtling away like a whirlwind in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT THE COURT OF THE FAIRY QUEEN

For awhile Olive gave up all hope.

She could only cling to the loose folds of thick skin on the monster's shoulders and save herself from being bumped and jolted off as best she could, beseeching him to turn back, or to stop. But Tiny was deaf to her entreaties, and kept on at a pace that made Olive wonder whether some magical and magnetic influence were not drawing him, so that he had no power to slacken speed even if he wanted to.

The one forlorn comfort she had was in the good, resolute thump, thump of Gog's mighty feet as he came in chase of them over the crisp snow. Yet Tiny on his stumpy, clumsy legs seemed to be racing fast enough to outstrip even Gog's enormous strides, and with a thrill of terror Olive soon became aware that they were almost back at the Museum again—the open gate was not a dozen yards ahead of them, and if once Tiny got her within it she would be at

the mercy of the grim Sphinx who was so dreadfully like Aunt Prue, and there was no guessing what cruel doom might be awaiting her.

Nearer they came, so near that Tiny was actually swerving in at the entrance, when a great hand suddenly grasped and lifted her, and she was no longer on Tiny's back, but lying securely in the bend of Gog's brawny arm.

He paused, puffing and blowing, then, recovering his breath, set off at a smart walk with the hideous idol that was Magog under one arm and Olive lying sobbing on the other.

"Lie still," he urged when she would have got down, "you are no weight, and I can walk faster than you."

"Where are we going now?" she asked.

"To Primrose Hill," he said, "to the Court of the Fairy Queen."

"But where is Magog's snuff-box?" she sobbed. "Oh, dear! we must not go without that, or I shall never see my brother again."

"The policeman will take care of that. He'll stick on to that Kangaroo, and so long as he does it will have no power to take the box to whoever is employing it, for $1\frac{1}{2}$ represents you. If he is true to you, it will be all right even yet," Gog

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assured her. "Anyhow, we don't know where to look for them, so let's make for Primrose Hill and see if the Fairy Queen can assist us."

Olive silently assented; for it really seemed to be the best thing they could do.

His strides were so gigantic that they must have covered a mile in three minutes; certainly, in less than ten they arrived at Primrose Hill, and Gog stepped over the railings to save losing time in tramping round to the gate.

And on Primrose Hill was such a spectacle as Olive had never witnessed before in the most impossible of her dreams. She would have known directly that a Fairy Court was being held there, even if she had not been told.

There was music and silvery singing in the air; the snow-white hill looked as fairy-like and unreal as though it existed only in somebody's fancy, and it glistened under the moon as if it were strewn with star dust; and up and down and round about the highest swell of it, strolling in laughing promenade, or racing and dancing merrily in pairs and circling groups, were a countless multitude of flitting many-coloured figures, many with whose appearance Olive was familiar, and many who were altogether strange to her.

Little Bo-Peep was there, roaming in search of her sheep; and Little Boy Blue blowing his horn as if he would never have done. The Pieman was there, and Simple Simon; so were Peter Piper, and Little Red Ridinghood, and the Wolf, and the Babes in the Wood, and Doctor Foster, King Cole, and the Queen of Hearts, and their retinues; and there were crowds and crowds of fairies, elves, gnomes, pixies and other such little people who live in fairyland or in the story books and are not merely imaginary persons, as we all know, whatever we pretend to believe.

The best of it was that all the fairy people seemed to have heard of Gog, though many of them had never seen him before, and the moment it got about that he was there they came flying and running and shouting joyously to meet him, and swarmed round him with clamorous questions and kindly greetings.

"Where is your Queen?" asked Gog. "We must see her without delay."

"Come along. We will take you to her," they cried. "This way! This way!"

They scattered and opened out before them like the water before the bows of a ship, and with a score of sprightly skipping elves leading, and a bevy of fairies and fairy-story people thronging beside and

after them, Gog, with that image that was Magog still under his arm, and Olive clasping as much as she could of one of his hands, went climbing up the hill.

"I know you quite well," Olive remarked to Jack the Giant Killer, who was glancing askance at Gog, as if the very sight of him were a temptation. "You are exactly like your pictures. Do you still kill giants?"

"I've killed most of them," he sighed, "and most of those that are left are so kind-hearted I have no excuse for meddling with them. There's your friend Gog, you know: he never eats people—he's a vegetarian. I do wish he would do something wicked, then I should have an excuse for tackling him."

"But it is wrong to want to kill people," Olive chided him.

"I suppose it is," he admitted regretfully.

"You were quite right to kill those other giants, though," she added, to cheer him; "they deserved it."

"I believe some more of them do, if we could only find them out!" he sighed; then abruptly changed the subject, as if he couldn't bear to think of it. "You shall dance with me presently," he said, "if you would like to."

Olive said she would, and meant it; for she felt it would be a good thing to remember and talk about to-morrow.

She chatted a little with Aladdin, too, and had a brief conversation with Cinderella, and shook hands with Sinbad the Sailor, as each pushed through the dense assembly and shortened and lightened the journey up-hill with their companionship; and to find so many old friends there, and all of them so genial and so glad to see her made Olive feel almost as much at home as if she had been reading about them with Tony and Becky in the nursery.

Which reminded her that she had seen nothing of Becky since they left her and Bluebeard in Trafalgar Square.

But there was no time now, to think of her or to enquire what had become of her; for they were nearly at the summit, and what from lower down had seemed the sunrise flaming over the top of the hill proved to be a shining golden throne, with glittering, snow-white steps leading up to it; and on the throne, and shining too, so brightly that at first, until she was used to the dazzle, Olive could not look at her, sat the sweetest, loveliest lady that ever was; and this, as Olive rightly supposed, was Titania, the Fairy Queen.

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No words could describe how beautiful she was, nor how good and kind the smile that was like a flicker of light upon her gentle face; and as Olive drew nearer, a growing fancy that she recognised her became certainty and, filled with delight and wonder, she knew that the Fairy Queen was none else than her own mother, who had unexpectedly arrived home in time to bring her and Tony out to-night and had, no doubt, been compelled to hurry away from them so soon because she had to hold her Court here on the hill. It was the same sweet face and, when she spoke, the same sweet voice that Olive loved and remembered so well, the same that had come to her often in her sleep these last two years; but always then she was only dreaming, and now, of course, she was awake.

"I wonder why she never told me she was the Fairy Queen, though? I did not know that—yet I might have guessed it, she is so good and so beautiful," Olive reflected, in joyous bewilderment. "She has made me glad to-night by letting me come out to see what I wanted to see more than anything; and when she hears about Tony, and how sorry I am about the others, she will put it all right and make me quite happy again as she always does."

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A slim, handsome elf, in green doublet and hose and a short green cloak, tripped down and conducted them up the glittering, snow-white steps and formally presented them to the Queen, who smiled and bowed graciously, but did not openly acknowledge that she knew Olive, for probably that would have been against Court etiquette.

A fairy Chamberlain robed in white stood by the throne, and raising a tiny wand that glittered like a diamond splinter he cried ceremoniously,

"Hail and welcome! Say, what would you with our Queen?"

He was rather pompous and dignified, and whilst Olive was trying to collect herself and think how to reply, the Queen gently brushed him aside and, descending from her throne, laid a soft hand on Olive's shoulder.

"I know why you have come, dear," she said, "so you need not waste time in telling me. The very first thing to be done is to find where the black Kangaroo has gone. If your friends are faithful to you the snuff-box is safe. Puck!" she looked down on the fairy throng that covered the hill, and clapped her hands lightly, "Bring me the Magic Mirror."

"The Magic Mirror!"

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From one to another the command was passed rapidly, and was being repeated far off on the outskirts of the crowd when a tricky, airy sprite with a red feather in his cap fluttered up and over from behind the throne on gauzy little wings holding something in his hands that shimmered and flashed as if it had been dipped in the dawn that was still below the horizon.

It flashed and shimmered so that Olive had to put her hand across her eyes, and when she ventured to peer between her fingers she saw that Puck had dropped on one knee at the feet of the Queen and was holding the Mirror up for her to look into it.

"I see it. There it is," the Queen murmured quietly. "At this moment it is leaping along the Fulham Road, tired out with dodging and straining to shake off its pursuers. See, Puck, and you will know where to find them." She took the Mirror from him and held it so that he could glance into its mystic depths, then, "Away!" she cried; "and bring them all hither to our Court with speed!"

As she was passing the Mirror to the Chamberlain, Puck's gauzy little wings flicked and at once he was high in the air above them; he clapped his hands thrice, and shouted.

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Instantly, with its cog-wheels sounding like the buzz of a big bee, the Perrier Water poster Airship swept swiftly and gracefully up to him, with John Bull steering it and the pretty French lady seated beside him. Puck vaulted easily in over the side, uttered a word of command and, as John Bull pulled a lever and gave the steering wheel a turn, the Airship swept away and away as if it were cutting through unseen seas, and the next minute it was a mere speck in the distance and you could not hear the buzz of it, and the next it was quite out of sight.

CHAPTER XIX

MAGOG IS CURED, AND BLUEBEARD AND BECKY MADE HAPPY

Puck was not long absent; but in the interval many things happened.

The Fairy Queen listened to Olive's story with close attention, and seemed grateful to Gog and Magog for what they had done and suffered in her service.

"Gog was as ugly and as little as Magog is now," said Olive, coming in the course of her narrative to what had occurred in the British Museum, "and when I kissed him, it made him better at once. But when I kissed Magog it did him no good, so we have brought him with us and hoped you would make him well again, please."

The Queen glanced at Gog, and at the small, hideous idol in his arms, and had no difficulty in accounting for Olive's failure.

"Magog is suffering more than Gog, because it was his snuff-box," she said. "That is how it was

one kiss was not enough to cure him. You should have given him two."

Olive and Gog eyed each other blankly, and exclaimed in chorus:

"There now! Why, of course—but I never thought of that!"

It was so simple, and seemed so natural and reasonable that it was curious it had not struck either of them until that moment.

Gog wasted no time in talking; he stood the leering, winking image on the steps of the throne and, as its dreadful ugliness filled her still with repugnance, gave Olive his hand, and, clinging to it, she bent and kissed the fearsome stone thing at random.

Remembering what happened before, she jumped back quickly; there was an instant flash, a thunderous bang and a swirling rush of smoke, which cleared off swiftly in the soft breeze that was blowing and revealed the gigantic figure of Magog towering on the hilltop, burly and ruddy and hearty, as if nothing had ever been the matter with him.

"I was beginning to think I never should get over it," he said, "and I don't believe I ever should, either, if it had not been for your courage, missy—"

But Olive owed him too much and was too sensi-

tive of it to let him consider he was under any obligation to her; she declared that his release was due to the goodness and wisdom of the Fairy Queen; but—

“No,” the Queen interrupted her, smiling, “you did it yourself. I merely said that two kisses might be enough to do it, and you were brave enough to try. I had nothing to do with it; but there are things I can do for you. Every visitor to my Court is entitled to three wishes and, whether I desire to or not, I am bound to grant them. Tell me the three things that you want just now more than anything else in the world, and you shall have them.”

“Oh, yes!” cried Olive eagerly. “I want to break the spell that is on Princess Pearl the Tatcho Girl, and makes her love gold and go with the Quaker Oats gentleman, Mr. Peckwater—I want to break it and make her love poor Bluebeard instead.”

“I put the spell of sleep on her,” said the Queen, “not as you have been told, because I was jealous of her beauty, but because she was too vain of her beautiful hair. This spell that makes her love gold was wickedly woven by Mother Shipton to thwart you, but I can break it.” She beckoned a shrewd little gnome who stood ready for her orders. “You

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heard our visitor's wish? See that it is fulfilled."

The gnome threw himself into the air, and flew away, and the Queen turning again to Olive asked, "What else?"

"I would so like to break the spell that makes Old Mother Hubbard a mermaid," said Olive. "I don't think she really meant to torment the poor dog by pretending there was a bone in the cupboard. I think she must have forgotten that the cupboard was bare till she opened the door and looked in."

The Queen beckoned another gnome, and said, "You heard our visitor's wish? See that it is fulfilled."

This gnome threw himself into the air and flew away, as the other had done, and turning again to Olive the Queen observed,

"That is two. What else?"

But before Olive could answer, there was a great cry from a long way off down the hill, and it was repeated and repeated all the way up the hillside until everybody seemed to be shouting together,

"Here they come! Here they are!"

It was the black Kangaroo. Olive looked and saw it, and clasped her hands excitedly. It was the black Kangaroo, with Puck running ahead of it driving the crowd back so that it might pass, and

John Bull and the French lady fluttering and circling watchfully close above them in the Perrier Water Airship.

Wearily, wearily up the hill the black Kangaroo came blundering and flopping and stumbling, 1½ dangling all limp and exhausted round its neck, and Dick Whittington on the fat Cat, and the Globe Metal Polish Lord Mayor's Coachman on Bill Stickers toiling after it.

They were all so dead tired that they staggered to a standstill at the steps of the throne as if they could not have gone an inch further.

1½ seeing Olive, and knowing that his duty was done, simply loosened his hands weakly and dropping from the Kangaroo's neck, like a ripe pear from a tree, sat on the ground where he fell, mopping his brow with his sleeve, for his handkerchief was left behind with his helmet.

Nevertheless, no sooner did Dick and the Lord Mayor's Coachman start dragging the snuff-box out of the Kangaroo's pouch than the faithful policeman was on his feet and helping them.

The box had grown so much larger by this that it was exactly the same size and, indeed, looked in every way as if it were actually the same old oak chest with the City arms gilded on the

front of it that stood under the window in the nursery at home. Inspecting it more carefully, Olive had a weird fancy that it really was the chest itself which had, by some diabolical trickery, been exchanged for the snuff-box, for how was it possible that anything so ponderous as this had ever been small enough for Magog to put in his pocket?

Her heart sank within her, and she was too troubled to say what she feared.

They stood the box down, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ started and glared as if he had been bitten, and swooped straightway on Bill Stickers.

"You're here, are you!" he raged. "You're everywhere, blest if you ain't. Where will you be a-shoving yourself in next, I should like to know!"

But the Lord Mayor's Coachman interposed.

"He's not to blame this time, officer," he said. "I asked him to come."

"Oh!" cried $1\frac{1}{2}$ truculently. "You've been aiding and abetting him, have you?"

"I'm past my running days, y'see," wheezed the Coachman, "so I got him to give me a ride after that rascally Kangaroo, and I've guaranteed him for the rest of his unnatural life. If you lock him up, I shall have to bail him out; and if he gets fined, the money will come out of my pocket. Consequently,

I ask you as, as a friend, be careful what you do, and don't go putting me to a lot of expense for him, or I shall end up by dying in the work-house."

"Here's a precious scandalous state of things," $1\frac{1}{2}$ protested. "You are interfering with the police in the execution of their duty, and encouraging a ruffian to defy the law—that's what you're doing, you know."

But when Olive went up to him and begged him to let Bill Stickers go this once, and to be easier and kinder to him in future, for her sake, he relented. He not only consented to let him go, but he pulled his coat on straighter for him, told him his collar had come unbuttoned, and sheepishly shook hands with him.

"Personally, I don't owe you no grudge and don't want to be bothered with you, nor with any other poster ruffians—you'd only give me the slip and be back on your hoarding in the morning," he said, "but so long as Guvment sticks up them notices against you I'm compelled to earn my salary and chivvy you about. You petition Parleyment and have them notices took down; that's my advice to you. Get them took down till you do something unlawful; then if you walk about and never do do anything,

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me and you won't need to interfere with each other."

Bill thanked him for his good counsel and, saying he would like to act upon it without delay and would therefore start taking subscriptions at once towards the cost of ink and paper and postage for the petition, he whipped off his battered hat and went bustling about among the crowd of fairies and poster people with it, as they do with the plate in church.

I $\frac{1}{2}$ was following his movements doubtfully and making up his mind whether this did not amount to begging and ought not to be stopped when the opportune arrival of Sunny Jim and the Tatcho Girl happily diverted his attention. They had all heard the joyous cheers that had been echoing and re-echoing round the hill, and from where the fairy crowd was most excitedly swaying and billowing Bluebeard now emerged with the smiling Princess Pearl on his arm.

He looked radiantly contented : so did the Princess. What was more, he was looking less like Sunny Jim and more like his lordlier old self : there was a picturesque growth of bushy hair on his head, and quite a nice sprouting of bright blue beard half-masking the lower part of his face.

"It's the sudden joy that's done it," he whispered

to Olive ; " that is what made it grow again like this."

" Oh, I am so glad ! " laughed Olive.

" So am I. She," he jerked his thumb towards the Princess who was talking to the Queen, " she says it's the same stuff she uses herself that did it. She rubbed a little on my head the moment she'd made it up with me, just a few minutes ago, because she could not bear to see me bald. But I put it down to the sudden joy myself, don't you ? "

Olive suggested that it did not matter which it was, so long as it grew again and was the proper colour.

" But have you seen Becky ? " she went on anxiously. " And Mr. Peckwater ? I can't think what has become of them."

" Don't you fidget about them," cried Bluebeard. " They are coming. They're close behind us somewhere."

And so they were.

They pushed through the throng, the Quaker Oats gentleman with his arm linked in the arm of the Desiccated Soup old lady, and came forward less importantly than Bluebeard and the Princess had done, but looking every bit as happy in a quiet way.

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"Oh, Becky!" cried Olive, running to embrace her. "I began to be afraid something terrible had happened to you as well!"

"Nothing terrible, my pretty, nothing terrible at all," chuckled Becky. "I'm as glad as can be! I told you it was a spell that drove Mr. Peckwater to carry on with that Tatcho Girl, and so it was. He says it was. But he has broken it. He did it by the strength of his own will, and—what do you think?"

"What, Becky?"

"We are to be married to-morrow."

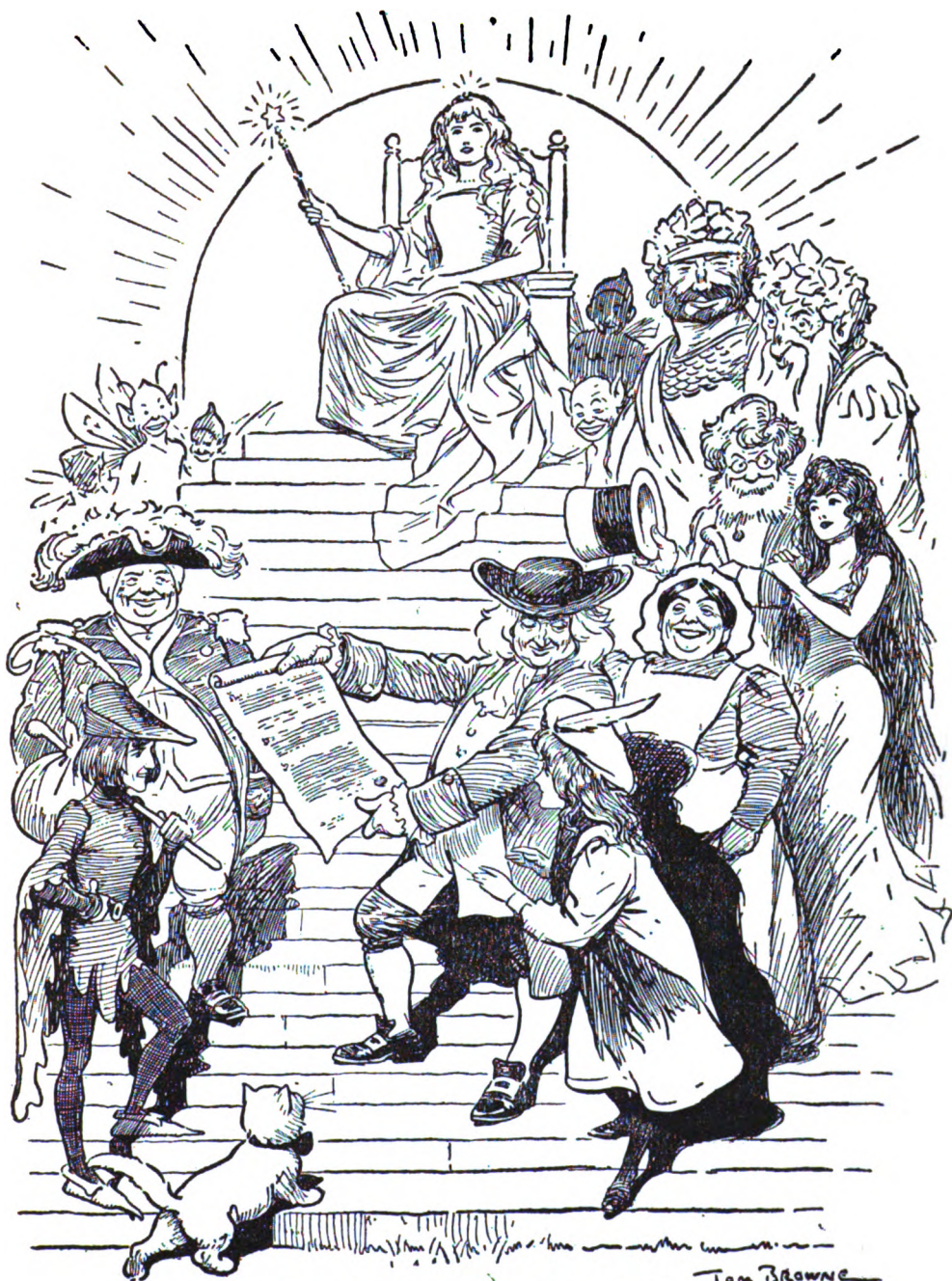
"Not really?"

"Really and truly! You wanted to know what that paper is he always carries so carefully in his hand with the writing on the inside so as nobody can read it. Well, now, you ask him. He'll show it to you. I've seen it."

"Will you?" queried Olive curiously.

Mr. Peckwater smiled gravely and nodded, and turning the small scroll of paper in his hand showed a lot of small print and writing on the other side, and reading it Olive made out that it was a special licence to marry Becky any day he chose.

"He has intended to marry me, and nobody but



IT WAS A SPECIAL LICENCE TO MARRY BECKY ANY DAY HE CHOSE.

me, all along!" Becky was triumphant. "There's fidelity for you! He's had that licence ready in his hand—you've noticed it on the hoardings, haven't you?—all the while, but it was his secret, and he wouldn't tell even me about it until ten minutes ago!"

CHAPTER XX

TELLS HOW TONY WAS FOUND

"It is getting early," the Fairy Queen interrupted them, "the dawn will be here in a few minutes and we shall have to go, and you have not had your third wish, Olive."

There was no need to consider what it should be; of course it was that Tony should be found again, and Olive said so.

"That," said the Queen, "is even more easy to grant than the other two wishes were."

She waved the wand in her hand, and tapped thrice on the top of the marvellously enlarged snuff-box; and at the third tap the lid flew up and Tony stepped out, laughing, and gazed around as if he were thoroughly pleased with himself and with everybody.

"Tony!" gasped Olive, clasping him in her arms and holding him, scarcely able to convince herself that she had him. "Why, how long have you been inside that box?"

"I don't know," he said. "I lost myself in the street, you know, and found myself in there. I was awfully cramped at first, I can tell you, but when the box got bigger it was so comfortable and I could see and hear everything so well through the key-hole that I kept quiet and let them carry me. It was jolly! I tried to open the lid once or twice just for fun, but I couldn't, and now it opened when I wasn't touching it."

It seemed very strange and miraculous, but so did nearly everything else to-night.

It was just as strange and as wonderful, Olive thought, that she should presently be dancing on the white hillside to the loveliest strains of fairy music, and that she should dance in turn with Jack the Giant Killer, with Little Boy Blue, with Dick Whittington, with $1\frac{1}{2}$, with the Lord Mayor's Coachman, and yet she never once changed partners, but while she was dancing they kept changing into one another in the most confusing manner. From time to time she had glimpses of Tony waltzing, now with Little Red Ridinghood, now with one of the prettiest of the fairies, and then with Old Mother Hubbard, who had got rid of her tail and was as light on her feet as any grasshopper.

The night was almost over now; there was a hazy

glimmer of light edging the snow on the hilltop when they remounted to it; the golden throne was there no longer, and the Fairy Queen had gone already, but she had left a message for Olive, which the Chamberlain whispered to her, and it made her so glad that she was not able to feel any regret.

She had no leisure for regret, anyhow, for there was such a crowding and pressing around her, and such a flurry and bustle of hurried good-byes and preparations for departure.

"Be good," said Becky, stooping and kissing her, "and be happy, my pretty, and come and see us again some day."

"Aren't you coming home with us?" asked Olive, aghast.

"Dear, no, my pet!" cried Becky. "I've got to get back on the hoarding till to-morrow night. Why, how do you suppose the Desiccated Soup could do without me?"

"But we can't do without you either, Becky."

"No—no, and you shan't," declared Becky, nodding mysteriously. "You'll find me at home as usual; although Becky's not me, I'm Becky, and that accounts for it."

Olive could not see how it did; she could not understand it at all; but there was no time to reason it out.

"Oh, your snuff-box!" she cried, as Magog, following Gog's example, gave her his little finger to shake. "I forgot to give it you back. It is too big to go in your pocket now but—Oh, dear! where is it?"

She peered about, but it was nowhere to be seen.

"Don't bother about that. I've got it," said Magog, amused at her astonishment, and he pulled it out of his pocket, no larger than it had been when he first entrusted it to her. "I told you when it had done its miracle I should have it again. Directly it was done with—well, it was in my pocket, see?"

Olive gave up trying to understand it; it was as much as she could do to believe it at all.

Then Dick Whittington came, among the last to say good-bye, and he seemed sorrier than any of them to say it. He kept her hand in his, and led her a little aside and asked hurriedly if she could not stay and marry him.

"Not now," said Olive. "I am older than Tony, but I am not old enough yet to get married."

"You don't love me," he sighed.

"I do," she replied frankly. "I do, really. And, tell you what!" she was yearning to say something to comfort him; "when I grow up and am old enough, I will come back and marry you then, if you like."

That cheered him a little, and he kissed her hand, and said good-bye once more, and set off down the hill reluctantly, but with a smile on his face.

Olive gazed around wistfully. Everybody was gone now, except Tony and P.C. 1½ who were waiting for her, and the hill was looking bleak and lonely, with the ghostly light of dawn coming up slowly behind it.

"Will you have to leave us too?" Olive turned to 1½ with a sigh.

"I ought to be back on my beat before the inspector comes round," he said, "else there'll be a row. But I've got time to see you safe to your own door first; you might lose yourselves if I let you go alone."

So he and Tony and Olive took hold of hands, and started down the hill together.



"I USED TO KEEP MYSELF AWAKE ON MY BEAT WITH SINGING IT."

CHAPTER XXI

AT HOME AGAIN

It seemed a long, long way home and, now everything was over, Olive found she was extraordinarily sleepy.

Tony was not half so tired; but then he had been riding most of the time in the snuff-box.

She was so wearied that, by-and-by, noticing how her feet dragged, as if she scarcely had strength to lift them from the ground, $1\frac{1}{2}$ insisted upon carrying her.

"That's better," he said, settling her cosily in his arms. "Now I'll sing you a nice little song that I made up entirely out of my own head all about myself. It will pass the time and help to keep you awake. I used to keep myself awake on my beat with singing it till the man who lives in the Monument and takes the money there reported me for creating a breach of the peace, because he said it kept him awake too."

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With that, he cleared his throat noisily and began,
in a loud and melancholy chaunt—

THE POLICEMAN'S COMPLAINT

While the public roam at ease 'mid palaces and pleasures,
And no burglar comes and tries to steal their household treasures,
While there's nothing out of doors to frighten them by day,
They turn their backs upon the pleece and most unkindly they

Call the pleece—call the pleece
(Ain't their conduct sad?)

Call the pleece—call the pleece
Everything that's bad

When a thief who sees how bulged the pocket of your coat is
Picks it with a slyness that is quite beneath your notice,
Though you might detain him, you prefer to let him fly,
Then run behind him calling out, and this is what you cry:

Call the pleece—call the pleece!

Surely they can match him!

Call the pleece—call the pleece,

Let them come and catch him!

If you're in the City and you can't get through the traffic,
There's a pleeceman smiling there a fearless smile seraphic:
He regulates the horses and the carts with subtle skill,
And if you want to cross the road, as probably you will,—

Call the pleece—call the pleece

(Other people do it),

Call the pleece—call the pleece,

They'll conduct you through it.

When there's nothing wrong with you and things are going proper,
When you've got your money safe and don't require a copper,
When you're not in any sort of danger any more,
When you are not needing us, you'll simply, as before,

Call the pleece—call the pleece
(Ain't your conduct sad?)
Call the pleece—call the pleece
Everything that's bad!

It's when you are in trouble with some wicked evil doer,
When you are the victim of a stronger man than you are,
It's when you find you're weakest and are going to the wall
That you begin to alter your opinions and to call,

Call the pleece—call the pleece
(As, of course, you should),
Call the pleece—call the pleece
Everything that's good!

There may have been some more of it, but that was all Olive heard, for instead of keeping her awake the song had an exactly opposite effect. She fell fast asleep in the middle of it, and remembered nothing more at all until she woke next morning comfortably tucked up in her own bed.

She sat up trying to recollect arriving home, and how they had got in, but could not. So she called to Tony.

"Oh, I am glad you are safe home too," she said, when he had answered from his room. "Who let us in last night? I can't remember. Can you?"

"Safe home? Of course I'm safe home," he cried. "Where else should I be?"

This puzzled Olive. She slipped out of bed and

ran through the nursery, noting the old oak chest under the window, by the way, and went into Tony's room.

But it seemed useless to question him; he had evidently been to sleep again and forgotten all about it; just as, in the morning, you do sometimes forget your dream, even though you may distinctly recollect that you had one.

When Becky came in a little later she was as provoking as Tony and had no remembrance of anything. But that was not so surprising; for if it was a fact that she was not the Desiccated Soup old lady, but the Desiccated Soup old lady was her, it was possible, though Olive did not quite understand how it could be, that Becky had been asleep at home all night. Or it was just as possible that she was only pretending not to remember.

"The idea of such goings on!" she ejaculated. "A respectable old woman like me gallivanting about with a Quaker gentleman and promising to marry him! What next I should like to know!"

She laughed sily, all the same, as if she knew more than she would say.

"But I can tell you something ever so much better than all your giants and fairies and poster people," she declared, gloating mysteriously. "Guess

who got home last night and came up and looked at you both while you was asleep!"

"Mother!"

Tony shrieked with delight, and began hurrying into his clothes; but Olive took it more quietly.

"I know," she said. "I saw her. It was mother who took us out to see the City, and she had to go away because she was the Fairy Queen, and the Chamberlain on Primrose Hill told me she had gone on home and I should find her here as soon as I got back, and so it was all true, you see, because she is here, just like he said!"

And then her excitement got the better of her, and she ran to her room and began dressing in a hurry too.

THE END

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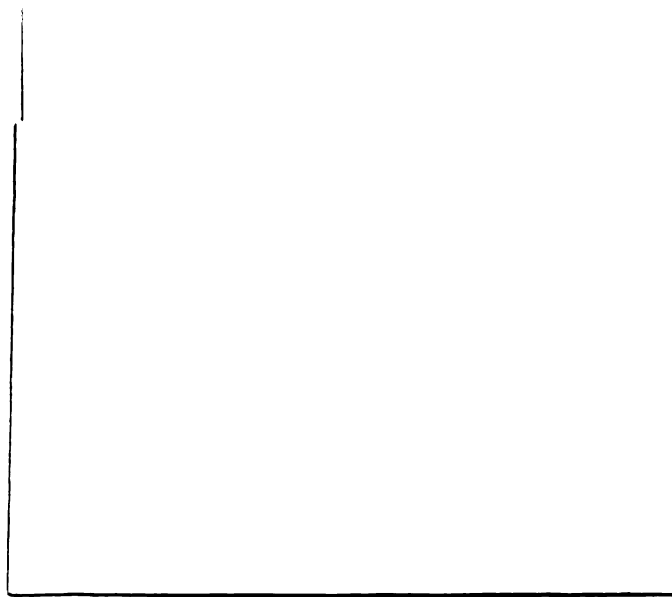
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